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BROADWAY BILLY'S FRENCH GAME;



OR,
The Miner Millionaire
AMONG THE
SHARPERS OF PARIS.

BY J. C. COWDRICK,
AUTHOR OF "BROADWAY BILLY" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

DOUBLE ARREST AND DOUBLE RESCUE.

"YOU are my prisoner!"

One of the French Mail Steam-Packets, plying between New York and Havre, was discharging her passengers at the latter place.

Among the first to leave the steamer was a bearded man apparently forty-five years of age, well-dressed, carrying an old-style gripsack in one hand and a white-handled umbrella in the other, while a light overcoat was hanging on his arm.

BILLY CAUGHT HOLD UPON THE COLLAR OF HIS COAT WITH ONE HAND, WHILE WITH THE OTHER HE SNATCHED THE BEARD FROM HIS FACE.

This man had taken but a few steps from the gang-plank when a younger man, well-built, with strong, clear-cut features and flashing eyes, confronted him, and not only so, but caught hold upon the collar of his coat with one hand while with the other he snatched the beard from his face, leaving him as clean shaven as was he, the younger man, himself. And with the act were uttered the words with which our story opens.

The words were spoken in English, and for a couple of seconds the two men glared at each other in silence, the one with determination, the other fiercely.

"Unhand me, fool!" then cried he of the false beard, sternly, speaking in French.

"You will have to speak English, if you expect me to understand you, Romaine Rosenthal," was the rejoinder.

"Fool! ass!" still in French. "You have exposed me for what I am—an agent of the police of Paris, and have spoiled for me the work of months!"

As he spoke thus the elder man tried to jerk himself out of the grasp of the younger, but in vain. The latter exhibited the strength of a young Hercules, and the other did not succeed in even removing his feet from where he had them planted.

This in less than half a minute, but already a crowd was collecting.

The younger man looked anxiously around, as if in search of some one on whom he depended.

"Harry?" he called. "Harry Freeman?"

There came no response, and just then two other men took a hand in the matter.

Springing forward together, both laid hands upon the younger man, and being powerful fellows, they tore loose his hold upon his prisoner.

Followed then a brief scuffle, at the end of which the younger man was seen to have handcuffs upon his wrists, and he stood, with parted lips, face flushed and eyes flashing, glaring at his captors.

"We have got you at last!" one of his captors exclaimed. "A clever trick you essayed to play, but it did not work. Good people, this fellow is Jean Roch."

The name mentioned was that of one of the most notorious of the younger rogues of Paris, a name which had become familiar to all readers of the Paris newspapers, for Jean Roch was a rascal guilty of many crimes.

He had thus far eluded every snare set for his capture.

On hearing the name, the crowd gave voice to numerous ejaculations, and the two men quickly drawing their prisoner aside, the passengers from the steamer moved on, and only the dock laborers and loungers, with a few other persons, stood immediately around.

The man whom Billy had called Rosenthal had disappeared!

"Is there a man here who speaks English?" the prisoner demanded, in a loud voice.

"It will not serve you, rascal, to pretend that you are English," sneered one of the captors, for the benefit of the bystanders.

One of the passengers from the steamer stopped short, on hearing Billy's demand, and leaving his lady companion he stepped aside to learn what the excitement was about, asking as he approached the group:

"Who is calling for a man who speaks English?"

"I am," answered Billy, promptly. "Can you help me to convince these men of their mistake? I cannot speak the language."

The man who had come to Billy's aid was an American, about fifty years of age, and by his looks a Westerner.

"I am in the same fix," he quickly rejoined; "can't speak a dozen words of the jargon. My daughter can, though, and I'll call her. Polly, come here, quick;" and

half-turning, he motioned to his companion as he called.

She now ran forward.

Meantime the two men were explaining the situation to a policeman, quite to his satisfaction, evidently.

"What is it, papa?" the young woman asked.

"That's what I want you to find out, Polly."

"Ask these men why they have arrested me, please," requested Billy.

The young woman looked at him, a flush of indignation mounted to her pretty face, and in French she demanded:

"Messieurs, the gentleman wants to know why you have arrested him? What has he done? He certainly does not look like a criminal, and he is an American."

"Mademoiselle is mistaken," answered one of the men, with a polite bow. "We know this fellow. His name is Jean Roch, and he is one of the most notorious rascals out of prison."

This was quickly translated to Billy.

"Tell him he is a fool, with my compliments," Billy warmly returned. "My name is Weston, and I am an American detective. I had just made an arrest, a man who is wanted by the United States Secret Service, when these fellows pounced upon me and enabled him to escape."

This was faithfully translated in turn, and the two men looked at each other.

"It is impossible," said the spokesman of the two. "The man whom he accosted was one of our colleagues, a detective of the Paris police, and it was an act of sheer bravado. Believe me, he would not have attempted it, had he thought we were so close upon his track. Do not let him deceive you, mademoiselle; he certainly cannot fool us."

"Tell them to search me," Billy responded to that. "They will find my badge, my passport, and other evidences upon my person. Besides, they will find a warrant for the arrest of Romaine Rosenthal, duly made out and signed. And if this is not satisfactory, let them take me to the prefect of police in Paris. If they are what they claim to be they will recognize their mistake, and will be glad enough to set me at liberty, I think."

This the young lady translated, her eyes snapping, and the two men looked at each other in a manner of astonishment.

"Can it be true?" asked the hitherto silent one.

"We will soon see," the other made response.

Straightway he began the search Billy had invited, and the proofs of Billy's claim were forthcoming at once.

The bystanders looked on in silence, deeply interested, and it was with ejaculations of surprise and discomfiture that the two men acknowledged the mistake they had made.

"A thousand pardons, monsieur!" spoke the leader of the two, unlocking the handcuffs which held Billy's wrists. "It is with shame we confess our mistake, but, it has been a double mistake, for you yourself had the wrong man, as you must certainly admit."

"I admit nothing of the kind!" retorted Billy, through the pretty interpreter. "I am sure I had the man I wanted. He answered the description, having the same heavy eyebrows with the two deep lines between caused by the habit of constantly knitting them, and he was left-handed. Moreover, I read the truth in his eyes the moment I detained him."

"Left-handed?" the two men exclaimed together, as soon as this was repeated to them. "How does monsieur know he was left-handed?"

"He advertised the fact," Billy answered. "He carried his gripsack in that hand, while

his right was burdened with only his umbrella and light overcoat. I asked no other proof."

The two men exchanged looks again, and the bystanders voiced their surprise in various exclamations.

"We sincerely regret our mistake, and humbly beg the pardon of monsieur," said the spokesman. "We are not wholly to blame, however, for we certainly took monsieur for Jean Roch."

They bowed together and moved away, as if eager to escape the scornful glances and derisive hisses of the crowd, which were beginning to be seen and heard on every hand, and as Broadway Billy gazed after them he shook his head, muttering to himself:

"I don't know about it: Paris detectives are not given to making such blunders as this."

"What do you say, sir?" asked the charming young lady.

"I was thinking aloud, that was all," Billy politely answered. "Pray permit me to thank you for the great service you have rendered me; and you, sir, for coming so promptly to my assistance."

"Don't mention it, young man," spoke the Westerner, heartily. "Tom Parker is not the man to keep still when there's a call for help, and as for my daughter, she is a stick of the same timber. We are going to Paris, where I have another child attending school. I'm glad to meet an American so soon on landing, and if you haven't any objection suppose we get acquainted?"

"Far from raising any objection, I esteem it a great privilege and pleasure," responded Billy. "But, I must look around for my missing friend."

CHAPTER II.

BILLY CENSURED BY A POMPOUS COMMIS-
SARY.

THE crowd had begun to disperse, and just at that moment a young man, excited and almost breathless, came running to where Broadway Billy and the Parkers were standing.

He was a handsome fellow, about the age of Broadway Billy, but just now he did not make a very presentable appearance. His hat was crushed, tie and collar torn loose, and he looked as if he had been in the roughest kind of a fight, and had gotten the worst of it.

"Billy," he cried, "am I too late?"

"Harry!"

Broadway Billy exclaimed the name in surprise. It was, as the reader has guessed, the Harry Freeman for whom Billy called at the time of making the arrest of the man whom he had addressed as Romaine Rosenthal.

"Am I too late?" the young man eagerly repeated.

"Yes," Billy answered, "you are. I made the arrest, but I was interfered with and the man escaped."

"Just as I feared it would be, and all because I was not here to aid you when you needed me most. But, it was not my fault, Billy."

"Your appearance proves that, Harry."

"I was set upon and detained by a couple of ruffians, and have only just now succeeded in breaking away from them. It has been a put-up job, Billy; they detected us, somehow, and have outwitted us."

"My own disagreeable suspicion exactly, Harry."

"How were you interfered with, though, and by whom? But, pardon me; are these friends of yours?"

"Americans whose acquaintance I have just made," Billy explained. "They came to my assistance and rescued me out of a dilemma, for which I owe them hearty thanks. Let me introduce you!"

This was done, and Billy made then a

brief statement of all that had taken place, his ally paying close attention.

"That has been just it," Harry cried, when he had heard all. "We have been duped, Billy, and badly, too. I was lured away in the neatest manner imaginable. As you say, Paris detectives do not make blunders of that kind. But, your friends do not want to be kept standing here; where are you going?"

"The only thing to be done is to return to Paris."

"I guess you are right. Maybe if we are prompt we can upset the plans of the rascals yet. It is too late to place the bonds on the Bourse to-day."

"That is where I am going, with my daughter, to Paris, sir," spoke up Mr. Parker. "I have taken a liking to you, young man," turning to Billy, "and when Tom Parker takes a liking to a man he tells him so."

"I thank you, sir," responded Billy. "Since we are all going to the same place, suppose we travel together."

"That is what I wanted to propose, sir," Mr. Parker declared.

It was so arranged, and they went from the steamship dock in company, but Harry took leave of the others then to repair the damages he had suffered at the hands of the ruffians.

Just here it may be well to offer a word of explanation to the reader before proceeding further.

While in London, Broadway Billy had received instructions from New York, by letter and also by cable, to proceed to Paris, and he had obeyed promptly. These instructions were from the United States Secret Service, for whom Billy had already done some important work.

The business intrusted to him was this: One Romaine Rosenthal, an English-speaking Frenchman, was under suspicion as being concerned in a great bonds robbery committed in New York, and he was to be shadowed on his arrival in Havre. A good description of him was given Billy in the letter. He was a left-handed man, and had heavy black eyebrows, between which, by habitual knitting, two deep wrinkles had been formed. If proof positive could be secured, the letter had stated, orders how to proceed would be cabled.

The cablegram came, telling Billy to meet a certain steamer of the French Mail Steam-Packets at Havre, where he should arrest the man at once upon his arrival; as it had been discovered positively, when too late, that he was the man, and it was thought that he had the bonds with him. Billy, thereupon, went immediately to Paris, where he made himself known to the American minister, who gave him a letter to the Prefecture de Police. Billy wanted to find an ally, one who could speak both languages, and the prefect recommended Harry Freeman, a son of an American resident, who had done some detective work on two or three occasions for which he had been complimented.

Billy found this young man, who was about his own age, liked him at sight, and took him into the case with him as his aide. They proceeded to Havre, there to make the arrest on the arrival of the steamer.

We have seen with what result.

There were now some open questions, although they were hardly questions of doubt in the minds of Billy and his ally.

In the first place, had Billy made a mistake in his man? Had he arrested the wrong person, allowing the true Rosenthal meantime to make good his escape? Billy did not for a moment think so.

And then, the two men who had arrested Billy in turn; were they genuine detectives who had made an honest mistake? Billy and Harry could not believe it, and the argument was certainly all against it. The

men were set down as allies of Rosenthal, with whom he had an understanding.

Rosenthal was a rascal not easily detected and even less easily captured—witness his eluding of the United States Secret Service men in New York. It was quite probable that he had looked forward to the possibility of arrest upon landing, and had taken precautionary measures in advance to prevent it, arranging for some of his confederates to be on hand.

This was a reasonable theory: and, as we may as well say right here, it was the correct one.

Romaine Rosenthal had communicated with two of his confederates, Pierre Marchaud and Baptiste Pegot their names, telling them to be on hand on the arrival of the steamer to effect his escape should his arrest be attempted. These men were strangers at Havre, and they resolved to play the roles of Paris detectives, about the safest disguise they could assume. Marchaud could speak English, and he overheard something that was said between Broadway Billy and Harry Freeman that put them on their guard. They planned to separate Billy and Harry at the last moment, with the result we have shown.

Marchaud and Pegot, as police agents, would have accused Broadway Billy of attempting to rob Rosenthal, had the bonds been discovered—for Rosenthal certainly had them in his possession.

It had been their original plan to declare themselves especial agents sent to escort Rosenthal safely to Paris.

Developments had upset that scheme, however.

Romaine Rosenthal, it may be said further, was one of a band of most skillful rogues, of which Pierre Marchaud was second in command and of which the mentioned Jean Roch was a junior member of great promise.

Harry Freeman rejoined Billy and the Parkers at the railway station, and they journeyed to Paris together.

Billy kept a sharp lookout for Rosenthal, but did not see him again, nor did he get sight of either of the other two, the self-styled police agents.

En route, Thomas Parker told all about himself in a friendly manner. He was a millionaire mine-owner, a widower, and his family consisted of only his two daughters, Polly and Berry.

Polly Parker was a pretty girl, of twenty years, and Berry was five years younger. Polly had been educated in Paris, and now her sister was attending the same institution from which Polly had graduated with honors a year previous to the time of our story.

Mr. Parker was an entertaining companion, and when he found that Billy had traveled in the West he became even more warmly attached to him.

On arriving in Paris, the Parkers went to the Continental Hotel while Billy and Harry made their first objective point the Caserne de la Cite.

It was now night, and the office of the perfect of police was closed, but the Bureau de Surete is open night and day.

Here they made a report of what had taken place, and the police were asked to be on the lookout for Romaine Rosenthal and his load of stolen bonds.

The commissary to whom they reported was a stiff-necked, pompous personage named M. Meulan, who was spoken of as monseigneur instead of monsieur, derisively, by the *gardiens de la paix* over whom he ruled.

He took it upon himself to censure Billy and Harry rather severely for their mismanagement, as he called it, of the work they had undertaken, and hinted that the prefect was little short of an ass for having allowed boys to undertake so important a task.

Billy's blood boiled when Harry made this known to him, when they had taken their leave, and he made resolve that he would repair the damage, with interest, if it cost him a leg.

CHAPTER III.

THE BANDITS OF THE BOURSE IN CONCLAVE.

In an obscure hotel in Havre three men were seated in earnest conversation.

One of these was Rosenthal, beardless, since Broadway Billy had unmasked him, and the others were the two pretended officers who had arrested Billy.

"But," we find Rosenthal demanding, "but how did the fellow know me? And who is he, anyhow? Confound him, but he had the strength of a young giant! I never met with a greater surprise in my life."

"How did he know you, M. Beaumont? By a description he had of you, to be sure. He knew you, spite of your beard, by the two lines between your brows, and by the fact that you are left handed—"

"Left-handed! How could he know that?"

"By noting that you carried your grip-sack in your left hand and your umbrella in your right."

"Perdition! Who would have thought of that? Pierre Marchaud, that fellow is born of the devil, and he must be sent home to his father."

"I quite agree with you, M. Beaumont. But, we can trust Antoine Grenelle and Jacques Brunn to take care of him—of both of them for the matter of that. They will not trouble us again."

"What have you done?"

"M. Max and Antoine are on the watch, and Antoine will follow them to Paris while M. Max will come here and report to us when they have departed."

"Ah! I see; and a very good move indeed. Then we can go to Paris safely by a later train. But, do you know the fellow? who he is? where he came from? and how he came to be here?"

"Ha! you have been away and have not heard. Why, he is an American detective who has been doing some work in London recently, and the papers have lionized him. He solved a mystery that was baffling the whole force of the London police. There is no question of his ability."

"I am aware of it; it would have been all over with me had I not looked forward to that very thing. But, he is an American, you say? Pah! They have no rogues there worthy the name, and how can they have detectives? In London it is the same; the rogues are asses and the detectives are goats. But in Paris—Ah! there we shall clip his pinions!"

The others laughed at this sarcastic sally.

"Well, and what is your plan, M. Beaumont?" asked Marchaud, presently.

"To get the bonds into the hands of M. Gerbeau, the honorable banker, just as soon as possible."

"But, investors will be on the lookout for them, now," spoke up Pegot. "It will be dangerous for M. Gerbeau to undertake to handle them, will it not? And if they are found—"

"They will not be found, my good Baptiste," Rosenthal interrupted. "Who can suspect the honorable M. Beaumont? and much less the yet more honorable M. Gerbeau? I see no danger, once the bonds have passed from my keeping into his. But, where is our friend, M. Max?"

At that moment the door opened and a young man entered the room.

"Parlez du loup, et vous verrez sa queue!" exclaimed Marchaud. "You mentioned his name and here he is."

"Who has been taking my name in vain?" the new-comer laughingly demanded. "It is not the wolf's tail you behold, however, but the wolf himself. M. Beaumont, welcome home again!"

He advanced and gave his hand to Rosenthal.

This worthy gentleman had at least two names, as it has appeared, and it was quite likely he had others besides.

"Thank you, M. Max Romaine," he responded, taking the proffered hand. "But, sit down and let us hear news of the enemy. Have they started for Paris? and is our spy at their heels?"

"Yes, to both questions, M. Beaumont. The two young men have gone to Paris, in company with the old gentleman and his daughter, and Antoine Grenelle is shadowing them. Following the orders of M. Marchaud, I told him to lead them into the trap of Jacques Brunn."

"Excellent! If nothing miscarries they are done for now, truly. But, you say they are in the company of the American gentleman and his daughter?"

"Yes; the same who rescued the one out of the hands of your two magnificent police agents here—ha! ha!"

"We will allow no levity at our expense, M. Max," admonished M. Marchaud.

"It is bad that they should have become acquainted," mused Rosenthal, knitting his brows frightfully. "That American is a millionaire, and I have taken the utmost pains to recommend M. Gerbeau, banker, to his notice."

"Ha! not satisfied with one great prize, you are already planning for another, I see," cried M. Marchaud.

"And why not? If M. Gerbeau can fleece him, so much the better for all."

"Verily, the bandits of the Bourse will become renowned."

"And the Prefect of Police, with his seventy commissaires, will weep and tear their hair—mayhap they will go into mourning. Ha, ha, ha!"

"And M. Meulan will weep loudest and longest of any," remarked Max Romaine. "Peradventure he may put on sackcloth and ashes. You forgot to except him when you spoke of seventy commissaires, M. Marchaud. I would that Jean Roch were with us to laugh."

"Ha! that reminds me," exclaimed Rosenthal.

"Of what?" asked Romaine.

"A scheme."

"I might have known it, M. Beaumont; you never have ideas of any other sort. But, what is this particular scheme?"

"A good one, you may depend," interjected M. Marchaud. "Our chief never has any others. M. Beaumont, I am going to propose that you be dubbed the King of Schemers at our next meeting."

"Yes; reserve it till then, I beg."

"But, this particular scheme?" questioned Baptiste Pegot.

"And how it concerns Jean Roch," supplemented Romaine. "Let us hear it, M. Beaumont."

"It concerns Jean Roch," the originator proceeded to explain, "because it is one in which we cannot afford to figure. Should the gun recoil, we would get hurt, my friends."

"Then it must contain a heavy charge, M. Beaumont."

"You say aright, M. Pegot, it does. If it proves a success it will bring us a million francs at least—think of it! a neat sum of pocket money to be divided among you all."

"But, the scheme?" cried M. Max.

"The scheme! The scheme!"

M. Beaumont, as they all called him, waved them to silence.

"It refers to the American, Monsieur Parker by name," he said. "He has a lovely daughter as you are aware. Mademoiselle Polly, but I do not intend to machinate against her, for I love her."

"Oh-ho!" his three companions exclaimed in chorus.

"It is the fact," M. Beaumont declared

impressively. "She is a most charming lady, educated and refined, a graduate of our most excellent academy, and—"

"Beauty and the beast!" interrupted M. Marchaud.

The others laughed loudly.

"Silence!" thundered Rosenthal. "I will allow no jesting upon this matter, I warn you. But, the scheme," in lower tone. "The fair Mademoiselle Polly has a younger sister called Berry, attending the same *semi-naire*. Now, supposing this tender Berry should be missing, how much ransom think you M. Parker the millionaire mine-owner would be willing to pay for her return?"

"It depends much on what kind of a berry—"

"Perdition! M. Marchaud, I wish one of your execrable puns would lodge in your throat and choke you to death!"

"Well, it is for you to set the figure, then, M. Beaumont."

"And I have already done so, in my mind: One million francs, and not a single centime less; that is to say, two hundred thousand of his beloved American dollars! I fancy now I can hear him groan."

"And you love his daughter!" exclaimed Marchaud, with uplifted eyebrows.

"Likewise his ducats," added Romaine.

"You are both right," laughed Rosenthal. "But, there is more to the scheme than you have heard, my good friends."

"Ah! trust our King of Schemers for that," cried M. Marchaud. "Now cometh the sequel, in which M. Beaumont will score one for us and two for himself. See if I am not right, M. Max."

"You are quite right," M. Beaumont admitted. "I must be the one to have the honor to find and make the terms with the knaves, and M. Meulan of the police will so manipulate his forces that they will arrive on the scene just too late to capture the rascals."

This had the effect to bring forth a hearty laugh, and for a considerable time they talked on. Finally, in disguise, they took an evening train for Paris.

CHAPTER IV.

BILLY AND HARRY ARE DOOMED.

BROADWAY BILLY and his ally, on leaving the Caserne de la Cite, took the shortest route to gain another quarter of the metropolis.

This route took them through a low quarter of the Ile de la Cite, where the lowest and worst of the criminal classes congregate, but as the hour was early they felt perfectly safe.

They did not know, however, and did not suspect, that they were being shadowed, and that by a man who had been dogging their steps all the way from Havre.

This man was Antoine Grenelle, and he had with him a comrade who was even more villainous in looks than he.

The latter was Jacques Brunn, one of the most notorious scoundrels in all France.

Silent as shadows, they were whispering earnestly together as they advanced, and presently they increased their pace, taking no further care to conceal their approach.

Hearing them, Billy and Harry glanced around, but seeing two men in blouses and peaked caps, and taking them for working-men, they paid no further attention to them. The next moment they felt themselves caught in what seemed to be a section of a fisherman's seine.

The two villains had parted, as if to pass them, but in the same instant they each gave a leap, crossed in front of them with something in their hands, and Billy and Harry were drawn close together in the fold of a net and thus rendered utterly helpless so far as resistance was concerned.

Nor was this all, for with the same movement as it seemed the two cut-throats made a spring for a darkened doorway, dragging

the net and its catch of human prey after them.

Harry uttered a cry for help, but almost before it had escaped him they were in a dark hall and the door had swung shut.

Broadway Billy was making every effort to get hold of a revolver.

This, however, was impossible, for the net had been tightly drawn and was still tightly held, and now a light was flashed upon the scene.

Instead of two assassins there were now five, one of whom held a bull's-eye lantern in his hand, and Broadway Billy had never looked upon five more villainous faces in his life.

"We are in for it," said Harry, in whisper.

"I guess you are right," responded Billy, coolly.

They spoke in English, of course, Billy knowing no French.

It was characteristic with Broadway Billy that the greater the danger the cooler and more collected he was.

"What means this, ruffians?" demanded Harry, in French.

"It means your death, both of you!" was the hoarse whispered response.

"But, what for? If you want to rob us, do so and let us go again; not necessary to kill us."

"Hold your tongue: we know what we are about. Now then, men, right this way with them, to the bath of death. Ha, ha, ha!"

The others laughed, and the two prisoners, still in the net, were dragged along the filthy, foul-smelling hallway to a door in the rear which opened upon a stone stairs.

Down this they were taken, still confined in the net.

The door had been closed and barred.

"Ha!" suddenly exclaimed Harry, on reaching the bottom; "now I understand it, Billy."

"I'm glad you do," Billy nonchalantly responded, "for it is more than I do. It would be some relief if I could even understand the language."

"That puts you at a disadvantage, but no matter so long as we can stick together, for I'll be your ears and tongue. But one of these fellows is one of the two who attacked me at Havre."

"That is all we need to know, then, Harry; the jig is up with us."

"So I'm afraid, Billy."

"What are they going to do with us?"

"They talk about a bath of death, if you can comprehend what that means."

"I take it that they mean to drown us. Well, it is said to be an easy death, if you can get any satisfaction out of that."

"It would be more satisfaction if they would let go of our arms and give us a chance to get at our revolvers. I think we could make it lively for them for a little while."

"We would try it, anyhow. But, they are five to two, and they will not give us a chance."

"It is not likely."

The five were talking among themselves while Billy and Harry were thus exchanging remarks.

Two men laid hold upon Billy and Harry each, now, while the fifth took off the net, and that done they tied their prisoners' hands securely behind their backs.

"Shall we rob them?" asked one.

"No," answered the one evidently the leader. "We want nothing to be traced to us."

"That's so," agreed the third. "Let them go with everything they have got, and it will look the less like the work of our sort. We are not caught napping, Jacques."

"Right you are, Jean Roch."

Harry could understand all, and now Billy, having heard this name before, sur-

veyed swiftly the personage thus addressed.

"I see you caught the name," remarked Harry.

"Yes; the fellow they pretended I was at Havre. I've taken his photograph, and I'll know him if I meet him again, even if it's on the other side of Jordan. Do you know any of the others?"

"The big, thick fellow is Jacques Brunn, the worst gallows bird in Paris."

"He looks it."

Their hands now bound, the prisoners were left in the keeping of one man, the others with some old shovels scraping away the earth from a certain space in the center of the cellar.

Presently a hidden trap-door was disclosed, and when the dirt had been sufficiently removed, this door was pried up and opened.

Cold, damp and noisome air came up into the cellar from a hole below.

"Now for the bath of death!" exclaimed Jacques Brunn.

"Yes, down with them!" cried Jean Roch.

"Will you jump in? or shall we throw you in?" asked Brunn, turning to Harry. He knew Billy could not speak French.

"I cannot see that it makes any difference," Harry answered. "Which do you prefer, Billy?" turning to him and explaining what had been asked.

"We may just as well jump in and have the agony over with," Billy answered. "They will find we don't scare, anyhow."

"The difference is," said Brunn, "that if we have to pitch you in, you will go headlong."

We will not deny that the faces of the young detectives were slightly pale, facing death as they were, but that was all.

They were determined not to show the white feather.

"Hold your light and let us look in," requested Harry, stepping boldly to the edge of the trap.

The fellow who held the bull's-eye complied, flashing the light around in the hole, Harry and Billy both taking advantage of the chance to view the place into which they must go.

It was a circular chamber, looking like a cistern, its wall being cemented, and in the bottom they caught sight of what seemed to be double iron trap doors. At one side were seen a wheel and chains, but before they could comprehend what these were for the light was removed.

"In with you!" ordered Jacques Brunn.

Billy understood by the gesture what was meant, and he said to Harry:

"Tell him we have a favor to ask, Harry. If in we must go, ask them to drop us in feet first."

Harry turned to Brunn.

"It is a bad jump, with our hands tied," he said. "Do us the favor to drop us down, since it is the only favor you are likely ever to have opportunity to grant us."

"The deuce take you!" the hardened criminal exclaimed. "Do you suppose we care a centime whether you get hurt or not? Maybe you would like us to provide a bed of down for you to fall on."

The others laughed, and laying hold upon Harry and Billy they pitched them into the hole head foremost, immediately closing the trap door over them and shutting them in total darkness. Then was heard the sound of the earth being replaced over the trap-door.

This was bad enough, but the worst was yet to come. As Billy lay there on his back, in a half dazed condition, he fancied he heard water running, and in a few moments more he was brought fully to his senses by feeling a cold stream flowing under him.

They were in a death-trap, there to be drowned like rats!

CHAPTER V.

BILLY BEATS THE DEATH BATH.

BROADWAY BILLY had been in many tight places before, but never in a worse one than this, he believed.

With an ejaculation of horror he made an effort and got upon his feet, and as he did so he called out to Harry, but he got no reply.

Harry had been the first one thrown in, and had struck on his head on the hard bottom and was insensible. Billy had fallen partly upon him, and so fared better.

Better? It looked as if Harry were the more fortunate of the two.

It took Billy but a moment to find his ally, feeling for him with his feet, and he made sure that he was lying upon his back.

His face would be out of the water for a few minutes at least, and Billy set out to learn where the water was coming from, with the vain thought of stopping it.

He speedily found the spot where it was falling, and discovered that it was coming from a point higher than his head.

Already the water was up to his ankles, and a perspiration broke out on his face.

Just then Harry gave a sigh, as the water began to revive him.

Billy was at his side in a second, calling:

"Harry? Harry?"

For a minute there was no reply, and it was a time of dread for Billy as with his foot he tried to hold his friend's head out of the rising flood.

He continued calling, gently moving his foot with the hope that it would have the effect to hasten restoration, and finally, when the water was getting so high that he could barely keep Harry's face out of it, response came.

"Stir yourself! quick!" Billy cried, sharply. "If you don't you're a goner, sure! Get upon your feet, Harry, somehow!"

Harry made an effort, and Billy aiding him with his foot all he could, he was able to get up.

"Thank God you are alive!" Billy fervently exclaimed.

"What is the matter?" Harry asked.

"Matter! Don't you remember the hole? We are in it, like rats, and they are flooding it with water!"

This brought the past back to Harry's mind like a flash, and in the same second he was himself again, or nearly so.

"Great heavens!" he cried. "We must get out of here, Billy, somehow!"

"That's the only thing we are living for, at present, but I'm afraid we are living in vain," Billy answered.

"We must get our hands free!"

"Right you are; turn around and I'll gnaw your bonds."

Billy dropped upon his knees in the rising water, and Harry turning, Billy's teeth were immediately at work.

The water was now up to Harry's knees as he stood, and Billy worked as he had never worked before at the same or a similar occupation. But, even with hands free, what could they do?

The same thought came to them both.

Nevertheless, Billy worked away with a will, and at last he had the satisfaction of finding one of the cords give way.

This one, however, did not free Harry, and Billy had to set to work to gnaw off another, and by the time that was done there was three feet of water in the cistern.

Still Harry could not free himself.

Billy got hold of one of the ends with his teeth and pulled and jerked at it, and presently this had the desired effect.

The cord loosened, and Harry was enabled to draw out one hand, which he did with an exclamation of thanksgiving, and in a moment more he had cut Billy's bonds with a knife.

"Grace a Dieu!" was Harry's exclaim-

"We have the use of our hands, Billy, at any rate."

"Yes; but I think it will be adieu to us, all the same," Billy responded, essaying a poor pun. "The water is up to our middle, and still rising."

"And it is going to rise till it fills this hole as full as a bottle, too," declared Harry. "We must find means to stop it, or to let it escape, and that in a mighty big hurry, Billy."

"Can you get up on my shoulders and feel where it comes from? Maybe there is a cock to shut it off."

"Yes, if you don't mind taking a douche while I'm doing it."

"I can stand it if you can, so up with you. I like to get wet all over before I plunge in, anyhow."

Billy braced himself against the wall directly under the flowing stream, and unmindful of the flow Harry quickly mounted to his shoulders and felt for the inlet.

"It is no use," he presently reported.

"It is a straight iron pipe, without anything else, and the water is coming out with great force. Billy, we are doomed, and may as well make up our minds to it."

"Can't it be plugged?" Billy asked.

"What's the use?" Harry answered. "Even if we could do it, that would mean a death even worse than quick drowning."

"Yes; but what we are particularly anxious about just now is this," rejoined Billy.

"You leap down and let me examine it. I never say die until I see the undertaker prowling around."

"I don't see how you can be funny at a time like this, Billy."

"Lord knows I'm far from feeling funny, Harry. Brace yourself, now, and— Ha! the chains!"

At that moment Billy's hand came in contact with the chains he had seen when the light was flashed into the cistern, and which for the time being he had forgotten, after being thrown in.

"Yes, I remember them, now," cried Harry. "My fall knocked all my ideas out of mind. What can they be for?"

"They are here for some purpose, that is certain," Billy made answer.

He tried to move the one he had hold of, but in vain, for it seemed to be fixed in place stationary.

"Lay hold with me," he called. "It may be they are to let the water out of the place. There are iron plates, or doors, at the bottom of the cistern, you remember."

"Ha! you are right."

The water was now past their middle and creeping toward their shoulders.

Harry laid hold upon the chains with Billy, and together they pulled with all their might, but could not budge them.

"Harry, it is our only hope," Billy grimly declared. "We must move this machinery somehow. I'll dive under the water and see if I can't turn the wheel. You hold fast here."

Billy ducked under the water as he finished speaking, and the next moment Harry felt the chain move, and he pulled with all his might in the same direction.

This time it was not in vain. The chain moved, a little at first, and then it loosened suddenly, and at the same moment there was a great noise, a deep-mouthed gurgle and a mighty rush of water.

They had opened the bottom of the cistern!

"Thank God!" cried Broadway Billy, fervently. "That is a great load off my mind, Harry; I don't know how you feel about it."

"We ought to be thankful to Him indeed," Harry answered, devoutly. "Nothing short of a miracle has been worked in our behalf. I haven't a doubt of our making good our escape, now."

"And when we do, see if we don't make

it hot for the villains who put us in here," cried Billy, vengefully.

The water was already gone—had been gone for some moments, in fact, for it had run out with a rush, and the supply from above was now plashing upon the hard, bare floor.

"What is the next move to be?" asked Harry.

"We must follow the water," answered Billy.

"And where do you suppose it went to?"

"Into the sewer, undoubtedly."

"Heavens! a fate even worse than this would have been!"

"I thought you said you had no doubt about getting out, now. I have been in the sewers of New York more than once, and I'm still alive."

"The thought gave me a shock, that was all, Billy. I might have known the outlet for the water was into the sewer, had I stopped to think. It is our only hope or chance."

"That being the case, we won't hesitate about taking it. Lend me your hand while I let myself down."

Billy found the edge of the opening with his foot, and with Harry's help he lowered himself through. The depth was less than he had expected, and in a moment more Harry joined him and they pulled the iron traps into place.

CHAPTER VI.

LOCKED IN THE SEWERS.

BROADWAY BILLY grasped the hand of his friend with a strong grip of congratulation.

"We are well out of that hole, anyhow, Harry," he cried. "I confess to you that I never expected to see the light of day again."

"Yes, good-by to Jacques Brunn and his bath of death," Harry responded. "The worst that has happened to us is a disagreeable wetting, after all, and that will not kill."

"There will be a surprise when they open their trap—But, they will not open it; they will simply turn the machinery and let the water out, and of course they will suppose our bodies go out with it. There is a surprise in store for them, Harry!"

"If we get out of here."

"Get out? Of course we'll get out. Where is the faith you had a minute ago? We'll get out if it takes a week, and then as soon as we have got our grip again, let these fellows look out."

"You bet! You see I am still American, even though I have dwelt a dozen years in Paris. The dead will come to life, and knowing what we do we will hold the net that will scoop the entire band whenever we see fit to pull the string. But if they discover that we have escaped—"

Harry stopped short suggestively.

"They will make escape impossible another time, eh? There is no doubt about that, Harry; they will cut our throats, to make sure. It will be our own fault if they do, though, that's all."

"Well, let's be moving."

"Agreed."

They had felt around to learn the kind of place they were in.

It was, as they had made out, a blind sewer; that is to say, a branch running into a main sewer somewhere, out ending here.

The two young men were all right again, from the effects of their fall into the cistern. The danger through which they had just passed had awakened their every faculty.

Broadway Billy took the lead, and they started forward, slowly.

This branch of the sewer, thanks to the flood of water that had just passed through it, was comparatively clean.

The sewers of Paris are of no mean size,

and they could move forward without difficulty. Being in total darkness, however, they felt their way carefully along step by step.

Nor were they alone, for numerous rats were running along the bottom of the sewer. They felt them strike against their feet frequently, and occasionally had to shake one from their trousers. The rodents were presumably returning after their escape from the flood.

Billy and his friend could not repress a shudder as they reflected what their fate would have been had the death-trap done its work.

All that would ever have reached the Seine would have been their picked bones.

Never a thought had had their captors of the possibility of their escape. Thrown into the cistern headlong, enough in itself to have killed them, with hands securely tied, all the chances had been against them.

The two pards talked of this as they went along, and after a time they came out into a deeper and wider avenue.

Here Billy stopped to investigate before proceeding further.

"I want to find which way the filth is flowing," he said. "Learning that, we shall know which way to go."

"True enough," mused Harry. "I did not think about it at all, you being in the lead. It is plain that you have had experience in this line before, as you say you have, Billy."

"How far can it be to the river, think you?"

"Not a great distance, if the sewer here leads to it direct."

"Come along, then, for the flow is this way, and we shall soon be out of our dilemma."

They pressed onward, still talking for company's sake, and finally the increasing depth of the mud apprised them that they were nearing the end of their unpleasant journey.

Presently the end came.

And with it came a surprise which Broadway Billy had not been looking for.

The outlet of the sewer, broad and high, was fitted with a gate of iron grating, and that gate was locked!

They could see the lights dancing upon the waters, could breathe the refreshing air, and could hear the hum and roar of the mighty metropolis above and around them; still they were prisoners.

"What I feared," spoke Harry.

"Why didn't you tell me about it, then?" asked Billy.

"No use piling the agony upon you in advance," Harry rejoined. "What's to be done now?"

"Who has the key to the gate?"

"The inspector of the sewers and his assistants—or some of them."

"And the chance is about one in a thousand that one of them will come and let us out if we wait, I suppose."

"Not a bit more than that, Billy. But, we can shout for help. Some one on the river will hear us, and then we can demand the assistance of the police."

"The very thing we want to avoid doing, Harry."

"Why so?"

"We must keep our escape a secret, if we can, for that will enable us to work to better advantage."

"Ha! you are right. What is the matter with my head, anyhow? Seems to me I can't think straight, since I was pitched into that cistern. But, unless we do call for help we are likely to stay here."

"Impossible to force the gate?"

"May just as well try to lift the quay over our heads, I imagine."

"Well, there is one thing we can do, we can try to pick the lock, and I'll go about it while you rest."

The lock on the gate was a massive, square affair, the keyhole passing clear through, and taking a peculiar-looking tool from his pocket Billy set to work.

He worked away with a will for a considerable time, without much success if any, but he did not give up, for once or twice he had come close to shooting back the heavy bolt.

The trouble was, the lock was too large for the tool he was employing.

He and Harry were talking the while, in low tones, and finally, just when the tool had caught and missed again, Harry exclaimed:

"Chut!"

So accustomed to French, he voiced his exclamation in that tongue instead of in English.

The sound was so like the English "hush!" however, that Billy instantly understood it to mean the same thing, and immediately silence fell.

A sound came to their ears from the river, a sound nearer than anything they had thus far heard, and of a different nature.

Something was scraping along the stone front of the quay, occasionally with a thump and a bump, in a muffled manner, and whatever it was it was within arm's reach of the gate, almost.

Catching Billy by the arm, Harry drew him back from the opening, whispering:

"It may be the river police, looking for thieves, and if you want to escape them we must not be seen."

They retreated to the deeper shadows of the sewer mouth, and barely had they done so when a boat containing three or four men came dragging along before the gate, and to their surprise it stopped.

The boat was under the overhanging edge of the quay, so constructed at that point, and was without a light.

"Thieves," whispered Harry.

"Do you think so?" asked Billy.

"Sure of it; no light on the boat."

Before more could be said, a rasping sound was heard, and the next moment the sewer gate swung open.

Whoever these men were, and whatever their business, it was plain that they intended to enter the sewer, and Billy and Harry were in a dilemma as to what they should do.

One of the men stepped out of the boat, then another, and the boat moved on and disappeared.

"Only two to oppose us," whispered Billy.

"Wait," cautioned Harry.

They had only a moment to wait, for, closing the gate, the men moved along up the sewer toward where Billy and Harry were crouching. The decisive moment was almost at hand when something would have to be done. Just then one of the men spoke.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THEY CAME OUT.

"Now for Jacques Brunn's drowned rats," Harry understood the man to say.

"Yes, and for whatever they happen to have about them," supplemented the other.

"We are not fools, I believe."

"Well, I should hope not. Why, the American chap had a sparkler on his necktie that was worth a good round sum, and we mustn't allow a thing like that to be lost."

"I noticed it, to say nothing of their tickers and what money they happen to have in their clothes. Jacques Brunn's bath of death is our gain, every time, when the game is good."

"The bath-tub has been emptied by this time."

"If it hasn't it soon will be, for it takes less than half an hour for it to fill and do its work."

Harry Freeman had caught hold of Broadway Billy's arm, at the first words, and they were silently retreating before the men up the sewer, Harry briefly whispering who they were.

At that instant a sound was heard, like the rush of water, and one of the two cut-throats exclaimed:

"Ha! the tub has just been emptied; here comes the water."

"Keep your feet!" the other warned.

The same warning was taken by Harry, who cautioned Billy, and they braced themselves for the shock.

It came immediately, [but it was far less than they had looked for; the long run through the sewer had had the effect to lessen the force of the flow, and the water did not rise very high.]

"What's to be done?" asked Billy.

"We know where they are going," answered Harry; "suppose we step into the first branch and let them pass."

"That can be done easily enough, no doubt, but we ought to have their hats and coats. They would serve as a good disguise when we get out, till we can effect a change."

"Would you take the risk of vermin and disease?"

"Ha! never thought of it."

"If we could see the fellows first, then it would be different," Harry added, "but I don't relish the idea of changing with them in the dark."

"You are right. We'll let them pass, as you suggest, and then we'll see if they have left the gate unlocked, or the key in the lock. Ha! here is an opening; in with you."

They stepped quickly aside into the branching sewer, and there waited, weapons in hand.

In another moment a light flashed along the main sewer, from a bull's-eye in the hand of one of the fellows, and they were now right at the junction.

Broadway Billy was nearest the mouth of the branch sewer, and as the men appeared the one with the light was nearest him and the hand that held the lantern was not two feet away.

Billy acted upon a sudden thought.

With a quick movement he snatched the lantern out of the fellow's hand and turned its light upon him.

The two men fell back with ejaculations of affright, and holding the lantern so that his own face could not be seen, Billy presented a revolver at them.

Harry took his cue instantly, and thrusting forth his revolver, cried:

"Surrender, thieves, in the name of the law!"

"Morbier!" one of the fellows exclaimed; "Policemen, you have made a mistake this time."

"How a mistake?" demanded Harry.

"We are sewer inspectors, going to make an examination."

Broadway Billy knew not what was being said, and waited a word from Harry as his cue.

Before it came, something unlooked-for happened. The man speaking suddenly lifted his foot and the lantern was sent flying out of Billy's grasp.

At the same time the two men threw themselves forward, and in the same instant, too, Billy fired a shot and a groan escaped one of them. There was a momentary scuffle, and that only.

The only object the two men seemed to have was to get away, and this they accomplished quickly.

They were soon running away up the sewer.

"We defy you, dogs of the police!" one of them called back. "Take us if you can!"

Broadway Billy fired a couple of shots in their direction, which had the effect to silence their tongues and increase their speed.

"That was a close call," observed Harry. "For them, yes," answered Billy. "I did not look for that trick."

"You want to look for anything and everything, here in Paris. Our rogues are equal to our police."

"I believe you are right. Now for the gate, and we'll see if they have left it so we can get out. I suppose the thing next in order will be a bath in the river."

"No; by swinging the gate open I think we can climb to the quay."

"So much the better—if it is open."

They lost no time in getting back again to the gate, but greatly to their disgust they found that it was locked the same as before.

"Here's a pretty mess!" cried Billy, in a whisper. "Almost a pity we didn't shoot the fellows and secure the key, Harry. I never shoot to kill, however, unless I have to do it."

"Try your own key again."

"Just what I'm going to do. It may work, now that the lock has been opened."

These remarks in whisper, as said, and taking his key from his pocket Billy slipped it again into the lock, and this time with success. A couple or three trials, and the bolt leaped back.

"Good!" Billy exclaimed. "Now we are out of the woods, Harry."

"Don't crow too soon," Harry admonished. "We are a sorry-looking couple to appear on the streets."

They pushed the gate open and stepped out, looking and listening as they did so. At their feet flowed the inky Seine, before them the lights danced on its surface, and above was the humming of the streets.

"Climb up the gate and take a look," Billy directed. "You can answer if you are seen and spoken to; I could not."

"No use doing that," Harry objected. "Let's rinse our feet and legs of this filth, and then get up together, and we will say we were in a boat and it upset and dumped us."

Billy recognized this was better, and agreed to the plan.

They cleansed themselves as well as they were able, and then assisting each other, climbed to the quay.

Not a dozen paces had they taken, though, when a policeman confronted them with drawn saber, demanding them to halt and give an account of themselves.

Harry was equal to this emergency. He laughed heartily, first of all, and then in a jolly way proceeded to tell the officer about the make-believe accident he and his companion had met with in the imaginary boat.

"But, who are you?" the officer persisted.

In answer to that Harry gave the name of a certain student who had become famous for his escapades in Paris, and with his jolly manner he carried out the role and deceived the officer completely, so much so that the man proposed getting a cab for them.

To this Harry readily agreed, knowing it was the very thing needed and that it would put the officer's suspicions completely at rest if he mentioned the address of the student whose name he had borrowed, and the policeman put up his saber and went in quest of a hackney coach, Harry tipping him a yellow coin to make it an object for him.

As soon as the policeman had gone Harry explained it to Billy, and they laughed over it between themselves.

In due time the hackney coach was at hand.

The policeman had explained the situation to the driver, and as soon as he drew up he sprung down and spread a rubber blanket over one seat of his vehicle.

Harry and Billy got in, Harry promising not to soil the cushions, or to make good the damage if they did, and giving the address of the student whose reputation was serving him so well, they were off.

They had not gone far when Harry changed his orders to the driver, telling him now to go to the store of a well known dealer in misfit and second-hand clothing, and in due time they were set down before his door, where Harry settled with the driver and dismissed him.

Here a tip in advance secured them the attention of the proprietor, and they were fitted out in good shape with everything they required. And when they had bathed and dressed, and had dried their papers and other effects, they took their leave in such disguise as would be most likely to serve their purpose best.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BOMB IN THE CAMP.

It was later in the evening when the party from Havre arrived in Paris.

M. Beaumont, so to call him now, took a cab at the station and went at once to the residence of M. Gerbeau the banker.

The others, Pierre Marchaud, Max Romaine, and Baptiste Pegot, took another conveyance and went off in another direction in company. They, too, had business in hand.

These three went to a quarter of the city that was not noted for its excellent name, though it was not the worst to be found.

Dismissing their coach, when it stopped, they entered a house and ascended to the top-most floor.

Here Marchaud knocked.

The door was opened by a rather good-looking young woman, who smiled the moment she saw who it was and bade the callers enter.

"Good-evening, my pretty Corinne!" Marchaud greeted her. "We have called to see that estimable lover of yours, Jean Roch," speaking the name in a very low tone of voice.

"He is not in, M. Marchaud," was the pleasant answer. "He will be in before midnight, however; he told me so. But, you must not speak that name, even in a whisper. Here, he is M. Jenardier, you know. Will you wait for him?"

"Your pardon, Madame Jenardier," with a smile and a bow most profound. "Does your worthy man keep his word with you as to the hour he will be in? If so, it will be our pleasure to await his coming."

"He nearly always comes when he says he will, unless something happens," the young woman assured.

"Then we will wait for him. Have you seen Antoine Grenelle to-night?"

"No; but The Squirrel came from M. Brunn and said Antoine wanted to see Jean, and Jean went off with him."

"Then it is all right, Madame Jenardier. They will probably return together, for we asked Antoine to meet us here after his work was done. The work has been done, M. Max."

"Most assuredly, and well done," the latter agreed.

They talked for a time, and presently the door opened and Jean Roch entered, Grenelle with him.

Jean Roch was clad in blouse and cap, and looked like a sturdy son of toil—for which he passed here in his place of abode, under the name of Jenardier. The young woman, Corinne, was his mistress.

There were words of greeting, and Roch and his companion sat down.

"Well, what is the report to our chief?" asked Marchaud.

"We have carried out the work," answered Grenelle. "The two will never be heard from again."

"How was it done?"

"They called upon M. Jacques Brunn."

"Ha, ha, ha! That is all that is necessary. They took a bath, of course."

"They surely did; and then, what do you

suppose? When the plug was pulled they went down with the water."

All enjoyed a hearty laugh, which was provoked more by the speaker's gesticulations than by the mere statement that the victims had gone down the pipe when the stopper was removed.

A few more remarks, and Marchaud changed the subject.

"Jean Roch," he said, in well-guarded tone, "I have other work for you to do, in which our pretty Corinne must aid you."

"What is it?" the young ruffian demanded.

"First let me speak of the reward. It will be five thousand francs if you succeed."

Jean Roch opened his eyes, and his mistress clapped her hands.

"That will mean fine gowns, Mistress Corinne," said Marchaud, temptingly. "I need not fear but you will do your part to win the reward. What do you say to it, Jean Roch?"

"It is a big price."

"I know it."

"You want blood spilled, evidently. Why have you not gone to Jacques Brunn with the business?"

"Ha, ha, ha! You are frightened before you are hurt, my good fellow. Not a drop of blood connected with it. Only a simple favor is required of you, but it is one that must be carefully handled."

"Name it."

"You must take a boarder here."

"Ha! is that all? Why didn't you say so in the first place?"

"I wanted to prepare you for the very simple work by leading you down to it gradually."

"And you will pay five thousand francs for that?"

"Yes, if it is a success; if it is a failure, and you should get into trouble, you are to keep sealed lips."

"That's the condition, eh?"

"It is."

"And I am paid for the risk."

"Yes, if it turns out well; we make it an object to you."

"Well, I'll take the risk, for that price, if it isn't too great. Give me the scheme."

"But, your promise."

"Of what?"

"Sealed lips."

"Oh, that is understood; I promise."

"Then give attention: At a late hour tomorrow night a young girl will be brought here to you, and you are to take the best care of her until called for again. You will keep her securely."

"Very simple."

"She will have a story to tell you and Corinne, thinking you are her father's friends paid for taking care of her for a day or two or longer. You will listen to all this and agree with everything. I will post you thoroughly about that later on, in private."

"I see."

"Then, when the time is ripe, the child will be taken away, and you will be paid for the service you have rendered. The important thing is, not to let it be known that the girl is here. She will be made afraid before she is brought, and perhaps will be as quiet as a mouse while she awaits the coming of her father, who will not come."

"How then?"

"At the proper time the child will be taken away again, and that is all you will know about it. At that time the money will be paid into your hands, and that will end your interest in the matter. Should anything miscarry, then another plan will be brought into play to relieve you of the burden. Is it a bargain? Do you agree to the terms, taking the risks upon yourself? Mind you, if you play us false, it will be the worst thing you ever did in your life."

"I guess you can trust me."

"Then you will do it?"

"I will."

There came just then an excited knock at the door.

Corinne opened the door, and a wretched-looking specimen of humanity staggered into the apartment.

He was pale of face, his feet and legs were wet, and he was supporting one arm with the other, having a cloth tied around the one, and that cloth was soaked with his blood.

"The Squirrel!" they exclaimed.

"Yes, and mischief is to pay," the man groaned.

"What is it?" demanded Jean Roch, who had sprung to his feet.

"We went to pick feathers," the man answered, "but we found the birds alive."

"Alive!"

"Yes; proof of it, look at this arm."

"What does this mean?" cried Marchaud, looking from one to the other.

"I'll have to tell you, for safety's sake," answered Roch. "I let the men have my key to go into the sewers—"

"Never mind that; come to the point. Tell it in ten words if you can."

"Well, he went to rob the bathers when they came out of Jacques Brunn's bath, and you have heard what The Squirrel says. That is all I know about it. But, it can't be possible!"

"It's the fact," the man persisted.

He told his story in full, and soon after Pierre Marchaud took a hasty departure, with a troubled look upon his face. First, however, he had given some instructions to Baptiste Pegot and Antoine Grenelle. M. Max went with Marchaud.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ARCH VILLAIN'S PLAN.

M. GERBEAU was one of the influential bankers of Paris.

He was widely known, looked upon as an honorable man, and was the sun around which any number of small men circled.

His home was a palatial residence in the Faubourg Saint Germaine, the wealthiest and most aristocratic quarter, where his wife and charming daughters were leading stars among the *élite*.

It was on this night of which we write that a *fiacre* drew up before the door of the banker's residence and stopped.

A man got out, bidding the driver wait, and rung the bell.

The door was opened by a liveried lackey.

"Is M. Gerbeau at home?" the caller asked.

"Who shall I say it is, monsieur?" was required.

"Say that M. Beaumont desires an interview immediately."

The caller was disposed of in the reception-room, and his name was carried to the banker.

In a brief time the lackey returned, scraping and bowing in the utmost deference of manner, and requested the caller to follow him to M. Gerbeau's private room.

This was a privilege accorded to but few men who called upon M. Gerbeau.

M. Beaumont accepted it as a matter of course, and the servant led the way and ushered him into the banker's presence.

The moment the door was closed the two men shook hands in a most hearty manner, the banker congratulating the other upon his safe return from his voyage abroad, and making him welcome.

They then sat down.

"Well, your trip was a success, then?" the banker questioned.

"Just as I cabled you, M. Gerbeau. There are the bonds in my grip, the series next to the one consigned to you."

"Excellent! They shall go upon the Bourse, and no one can ever trace where they came from when the discovery is made,

nor where the money paid for them has gone to."

"And M. Gerbeau will be the honorable banker still."

"*Morbleu!* let us have no jesting, and no such remarks, M. Beaumont. That is the unwritten understanding."

"Well, pardon me. You will acknowledge the regular consignment, of which you will show accurate record, and there all knowledge of it will end, so far as you are concerned."

"And you will know what to do with your two-thirds of the profits."

"And you with your one-third."

"Enough."

"Out of my profits I have to bear the expense I have been put to, and not only so, but pay the assistants I have had to employ. Of course you know nothing about that. Do you accept the bonds here?"

"The very best place in the world, M. Beaumont."

"I thought so. No one will be the wiser, and it will be your business to see that they reach the Bourse."

"I have already arranged for that, and there is nothing, apparently, to hinder the success of the daring experiment. But, are you quite sure no detectives are on your track?"

"Quite sure, now."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say, M. Gerbeau."

"But, you hint that there have been such."

"Exactly; but, they have now been disposed of for all time."

The banker's face had a troubled expression, and he got up and paced the floor nervously.

"I do not really like the looks of things now," he declared. "If you have had to resort to the worst, are you sure you are above danger of suspicion?"

"Doubly sure. But, I will tell you how it was, so you may see and understand for yourself. And then I have another scheme to unfold for your benefit—and my own."

"The latter, assuredly."

"No matter, give attention: When M. Beaumont, self, left Paris, the said M. Beaumont went to London, where it can be shown that he has been stopping at one of the best hotels during these weeks. At the same time M. Rosenthal, self again, sailed from Havre for New York."

"I follow you; so it was arranged."

"Exactly. Well, leaving New York I cabled to my dummy self in London when to return to Paris, and, behold, when M. Rosenthal steps upon French soil he becomes immediately M. Beaumont again, and he has been spending time in London. Who M. Rosenthal was, and what has become of him, who can say? He simply was, but now is not, and that is all."

"Very clever."

"But, it came close to being all undone by an accursed young detective who met me when the steamer landed, and who would have seized these bonds had I not prepared for such an accident beforehand. He is now asleep with the good and true, however, and so I think we are doubly safe, having removed from our path the one person who had a clue against me on this side. There can be nothing to fear now, M. Gerbeau, as you perceive."

"It does look as if you must be safe, M. Beaumont. Ah! what would not our good *préfet de police* give to have you for a secret agent!"

"I flatter myself that I could serve him well."

"You foiled the American detectives?"

"It was mere child's play."

"Well, your scheme?"

"It is an excellent one, as you will have to admit. You know the make-believe M. Beaumont and myself look quite alike. This fact was taken into consideration in the first

instance. Keep this before your mind's eye for a moment."

"I follow you."

"Well, when we touched at Plymouth and this man came on board, I got him to my cabin as quick as possible in order to have a talk with him. Having arranged everything with him, I changed personages—rather personality with him, if either word will apply. He assumed my disguise, and playing my role as M. Rosenthal, introduced me to M. Parker as M. Beaumont."

"You nearly confuse me, M. Beaumont. And, too, who is M. Parker?"

"Ah! that is the finesse of it all, M. Gerbeau. M. Parker is a millionaire American just come to Paris with his daughter. As M. Beaumont, I strongly recommended M. Gerbeau, banker, to his notice. There is no doubt but he will call upon you, and naturally you will be benefited by having his account to handle. Then, there will be opportunities which you will recognize outside of legitimate business lines; I leave all that to you."

"I am greatly obliged to you for your interest in me, M. Beaumont, I am sure; you have neglected your own."

"Not by any means, M. Gerbeau. On the voyage over I fell in love with the charming daughter of M. Parker, and as M. Beaumont, introduced by M. Rosenthal, with whom M. Parker had become quite intimate during the voyage, I must win her hand if I can. Do you see? Now, if M. Gerbeau, banker, will speak the right word for M. Beaumont, it will probably go a long way with M. Parker."

"That is a small favor, M. Beaumont."

"You have now heard the scheme in part. This M. Parker has another child in Paris. She is attending school here. To-morrow she will be sent for to come to the hotel where her father is stopping, and that is the last that will be seen of her. M. Parker will then be informed, in due time, that he can have his child upon payment of one million francs. He can easily afford it, and will pay only too gladly, the more especially as the payment will be made through Mr. Gerbeau, banker."

"Never!"

"What? You refuse?"

"I quite positively refuse, M. Beaumont."

"Well, I supposed you would, but I think I can lead you to reconsider that. By paying the money to you, M. Parker will have an excellent opportunity to put the police upon the track of the kidnappers—"

"The very reason why I refuse."

"Exactly; but, the money is to be paid through me. I will be the one to find and restore the child, and thus I shall win the undying gratitude of father and daughter, alike, and my chances will be enhanced. M. Parker will give me the order upon the banker. I will go to the banker and get the cash—which you will put aside and which I will not take with me at all. The police will follow me. They will arrive just too late. I will have the child, but the money will be gone. Do you see?"

"Ah! that makes it look better."

"One million francs better, Mr. Gerbeau, and the money will never leave your possession for a moment until we make our divide. That is to say, with the exception of about ten thousand francs, which I must have for the working of the scheme. What do you say to it now?"

"I agree, seeing the little risk I run, M. Beaumont."

CHAPTER X.

BILLY'S DARK OUTLOOK.

HALF an hour later, when M. Beaumont took his leave, everything had been arranged.

No more is required to be said concerning

the true character of M. Gerbeau, the banker. While looked upon as an honorable man, he was far from being such.

M. Beaumont had lodgings in another part of the city, and entering the *fiacre* once more, he was driven there, where, to his surprise, he found M. Marchaud and M. Max Romaine awaiting him.

"Ha! what means this?" Beaumont demanded.

"We came to apprise the doorkeeper of your coming, so that he could air your room," Marchaud answered.

"Fool!" cried Beaumont. "I know better than that. Tell me what has brought you here? What has turned up, that you must see me again to-night?"

"Since you seem to know it is something," was the rejoinder, "suppose you wait until we have gone up to your room before you demand us to tell? I am sure it will not interest your *concierge*."

M. Beaumont took the hint, and though the doorkeeper looked as if it would have interested him, they passed up-stairs.

"Now," Beaumont demanded, as soon as they had entered the room, "what?"

"Well, the detectives got out, somehow."

"Furies!"

"That is only a mild word to express it, M. Beaumont."

"No word can express the indignation I feel," cried the chief of the band, as he paced the floor.

"We thought it best to come and tell you immediately, so that you would know and could give orders as to what shall be done. We think you will agree that we have done right."

"Yes, yes, you have done right; but, tell me, how the escape? Is it possible that Grenelle was such an ass that he could not deliver them into the hands of Jacques Brunn? If this is true, he is unworthy to be a member of our band any longer."

"On the contrary, M. Beaumont, he did his part well, and the spies were put in Jacques Brunn's bath of death."

"And you say they are alive? Folly!"

"It is true."

"Impossible, I tell you!"

"Yet in this case the impossible has happened. They were put in the bath—in fact, were thrown in, with their hands tied. The water was turned on and the tub was filled. It was allowed to stand for a time, and then it was emptied. Nevertheless, the victims came out alive."

"Ha, ha, ha! Man, you are crazy. You are a fool to come to me with such a story as this. Have you no other way to shirk the responsibility? Now if you had told me a reasonable lie I might believe—"

"Sacrebleu! do you think I would come here and lie to you at all? Fool back into your teeth, M. Beaumont."

"But, think what you ask me to believe."

"Exactly; the impossible has happened. How it happened, who can, say? But, as it has happened, what is to be done?"

"I can tell you nothing until I know everything. Furies! are we to be balked at last, after all this trouble, and when success is within our grasp? No, by the stars, no!"

"You know that Jean Roch, as an assistant to the sewer inspectors, has a key to the gates of the sewers. If you do not know it, it is so. He can visit the sewers at his pleasure, and he sometimes lends his key to others, M. Beaumont."

"But, the point, come to the point."

"It is right here. Jacques would not allow the bodies to be robbed, and two of the men obtained the key from Jean to go into the sewer to pick the feathers, as it is called, when the birds were let out of the trap. They went, and one of the men got a bullet in his arm."

"But, did they see these same young men? You say there were still two?"

"Two there were, and they saw them both."

"And you believe it?"

"I must."

"Why?"

"First, because the man who got the bullet says so; and second, because the bodies were not found."

M. Marchaud then gave every particular of the affair, as he had obtained it from the wounded man, and M. Beaumont had to believe in spite of himself. At any rate, the doubt was not to be slighted.

"Well, there is only one thing to be done," Beaumont declared.

"And that is?"

"To kill."

"First, the game has to be found."

"It will be found. If they have escaped, they will not give up the work they have undertaken."

"And if found, they will be ten times more wary than before."

"No matter; it is my order that they die; do you understand? And there must be no uncertainty about it."

"Yes, I understand, of course."

"See, then, that the order is carried out. Let it be the dagger, the sword, or the pistol, I care not how; and let it be used on suspicion; do not wait for proof."

"It shall be done."

"Ha!"

"What?"

"A thought. They will reveal themselves to the police, of course."

"Oh, assuredly. We have thought of that, and not a man will throw his shadow anywhere near Jacques Brunn's *coupé-gorge*."

"Moreover, those whose names they have learned, and whose faces they have seen, will have to be careful. But, that is not what I am coming at. We have M. Meulan to fall back upon."

"Ha! excellent!"

"This, however, must not pass beyond ourselves."

"Certainly."

"I will see him, and he will know something about the matter and will be able to direct me."

"Positively."

"And the rest will be easy. I can direct you, and you in turn can pass the word on down to the others, and before they know it the deed will be done."

"Success is still ours, M. Beaumont."

While they were talking there came a rap at the door.

M. Beaumont opened it, and there stood M. Meulan, the rascally commissary of police!

"Welcome home, M. Beaumont!" he exclaimed.

"And doubly welcome, you, just at this time," was the response.

"I see something is wanted; can tell it by your faces, gentlemen. What is the matter?"

"The same business that has brought you here, undoubtedly."

"Very true; I can read it all, my friends. I have come to warn you that the young man who tried to arrest you at Havre is here in Paris."

"We know it, though it is no fault of ours that he is not out of Paris, for he was caught in a net as neatly as possible. I suppose his report is on record at the Prefecture de Police."

"Yes—modified by me."

"Good."

"But, you wanted to see me?"

"Yes, for no doubt these young men will render another report."

"And if it is to any one but me, look out! But, what is it you want? Information concerning them?"

"You have guessed it."

"You shall have it."

The talk then, for a time, covered the ground we have been over, and details of

the double—or triple—scheme were all arranged.

On the morrow they would be set in motion.

A triple scheme? Ay, a fourfold plot of villainy was at work, now that the death of Broadway Billy and his ally had been decreed.

And what chance would they stand against these bandits, when men highest in authority were pitted against them? It would be a most unequal contest, handicapped as was Billy, unable to speak the tongue.

Their conclave at an end, the arch conspirators separated, each with an understanding of the business in hand and his part in it.

Well we may ask how it would terminate.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SCHEME SET IN MOTION.

NEXT morning Paris awoke refreshed and beautiful.

The day was charming, the air clear and pure, and to look down upon the lovely city from the heights of Montmartre, or the cemetery of Pere La Chaise, one could hardly believe the city hides so much wretchedness and crime as it does.

At a reasonably early hour Thomas Parker, the millionaire mine-owner, with his charming daughter, set out from the Hotel Continental in a carriage.

They took a short but pleasing drive, and finally stopped at the banking house of M. Gerbeau.

Here they alighted and entered.

Polly had to do the talking for her father, of course.

She asked for M. Gerbeau, and they were shown into his elegantly appointed private room.

They were greeted with the utmost politeness, were given seats, and after the first words had been exchanged, Polly proceeded to say:

"Monsieur, my father does not speak the language, so I must act as interpreter between you and him. He has been recommended to you, and desires to make a deposit, I believe."

"By whom recommended, may I ask, mademoiselle?"

"One M. Beaumont, monsieur."

"Ah, indeed! Then you enjoy the acquaintance of that most excellent gentleman, do you? His name is sufficient with me. I almost wish your father desired to borrow instead of deposit, that I might honor my friend."

This Polly repeated to her father in English, and he acknowledged it by a nod and a wave of the hand.

"Say to him that I want to deposit my letter of credit for five hundred thousand dollars, Polly," he said.

This was given back, and the banker opened his eyes with delight.

"It is my pleasure," he cried, rubbing his hands together. "My banking-house is yours, M. Parker. You will find that the name of M. Gerbeau is honored in Paris as second to none."

The details of the business were quickly arranged, and after some other talk, the father and daughter were bowed out.

Entering their carriage, Polly gave directions to the academy.

"Now to see Berry!" exclaimed the fond father.

"Yes, and she is looking for us every day, since I wrote to her, of course."

"And yet it will be a surprise to her when we come unheralded. I long to see the child, Polly."

"I am just dying to see her, papa!"

In due time they were at their destination, and Polly was almost beside herself with delight.

It seemed like coming home again, for she had spent several years of her life here, and here she loved and was beloved, alike.

They were quickly admitted, and the moment the madame appeared, she caught Polly in her arms and they tenderly embraced. Then Mr. Parker was cordially greeted in turn.

"But, where is your dear sister?" the madame inquired.

"My sister!" exclaimed Polly, turning pale. "We have come to see her, here, madame."

"*Helas!* she is not here! Did your father not send for her to come to you at the Hotel Continental? She departed an hour ago."

"What's the matter, Polly?" demanded Mr. Parker, seeing that something was wrong. "I hope Berry is not sick. Confound this foreign language; why can't everybody talk plain English?"

"Berry is gone, papa!"

"Gone!"

"Yes; she went an hour ago to the hotel."

"Thunder! what business had she to leave here till we came? How did she know we had arrived?"

"No, no, you do not understand, papa. A carriage came for her, saying you had sent for her, and the prioress allowed her to be taken. Did you send for her, and forget about it?"

"Blazes, no! What do you take me for, Poll? What can this mean, anyhow? I am alarmed. Find out all you can from the woman, and be quick."

"Tell me all about it, madame," Polly asked, turning again to the prioress.

The woman was pale to the lips, and trembling.

"I have told you about all," she declared. "I carriage came here from the Hotel Continental, and a gentleman said M. Parker had sent for his child to be brought to him at the hotel. I might have doubted, possibly, but only a few minutes before I had read of your arrival in the newspapers. *Mon Dieu!* is it possible she was not sent for?"

"She positively was not, madame."

"Oh! what does it mean? What can be done? You must go to the hotel at once, for it is possible she is there—Wait, I will go with you!"

She ran from the room, and Polly threw herself weeping upon her father's breast.

Parker was pale, and he demanded to know what more had been said.

"I cannot understand it, Polly," he cried.

"There is a mystery here."

"Oh! what can it be, papa? Can any harm have befallen Berry? Who can have sent for her?"

"God only knows, my child. But, we shall see, for if she is not at the hotel, we will drive straight to the Prefecture of Police."

The prioress quickly returned, ready for the street.

"Let us not lose a moment," she urged. "To the hotel as quickly as possible, and if she is not there, then to the police with all haste. Oh! why did I allow her to go out?"

"We cannot blame you, madame," said Polly.

"But I blame myself, my dear. Still, I wanted to oblige your father in his wish, and who could have suspected? I knew you were here and at the Continental Hotel, you know."

They were quickly in the carriage, and the driver was told to get to the hotel with all haste possible.

He obeyed the order, and they were soon at their destination.

Polly sprung out to make the inquiries.

No, the child had not been brought there; no one had asked for M. Parker during his absence.

It was a mystery, truly, and Polly Parker returned to the carriage almost hysterical, crying out to the driver to run his horses to the Prefecture de Police.

The three were now greatly alarmed, and with good reason.

In due time they were at their destination, and the prefect of police was found in his office.

Polly and the prioress of the academy proceeded to tell what had happened, almost breathlessly, and the prefect said nothing until they had done, when he began a series of questions.

"You did not know the gentleman, Madame le Prieure?"

"I did not, Monsieur le Prefect."

"You would know him if you saw him again?"

"I think I would, monsieur."

"With the chances that you would not. Undoubtedly he was in disguise. Did you give any notice to the conveyance?"

"I took it to be one of the hotel carriages."

"The horse, or horses?"

"I do not know."

"One or two?"

"I am not sure."

The prefect made a gesture of disgust.

"If people would only observe things," he muttered to himself, yet loud enough for the others to hear.

"What can be done?" asked Polly.

"Ah! mademoiselle, if we only had a clue, which we have not. Is your father a wealthy man?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Then you will hear from the child soon, my word for it. A ransom will be demanded for her return."

"And you think no harm will come to her?"

"Positively not, if that is the case. On the other hand, if M. Parker has a personal foe, who would seek revenge in this manner—just ask him that, if you please."

No, Parker had no foe, so far as he knew. And to numerous other questions he answered to the best of his knowledge; whom he knew in Paris, what acquaintances he had made on the steamer, etc., etc.

When they left the Prefecture de Police the prioress was taken back to the academy, and from there Mr. Parker and Polly returned sadly to their hotel. They were eager now to see Billy Weston, who had promised to call during the forenoon.

CHAPTER XII.

M. BEAUMONT IN A CLOSE CORNER.

MEANTIME a police agent was shadowing them.

A quiet man who was present when they were talking with the prefect, had received orders to follow them immediately upon their departure.

Nor was this without an object. If the scheme was to force a ransom out of Mr. Parker, some one would have to approach him, and seeing that person, the police would have a clue to work upon.

The same if some foe had stolen the child for revenge. It would be but a poor revenge unless the person could let his victim know who had dealt the blow, and in the same manner the police hoped to get hold of the secret. So, the secret agent was following them.

On reaching their hotel they were informed that two ladies were awaiting to see them.

The women had been shown up to the parlor belonging to their suite.

There Mr. Parker and Polly found them.

Both were clad in black, and both wore veils. One was apparently well on in years, while the other was younger, to judge by first appearances.

They were women of large figure, but not fat. They did not lift their veils, and for some seconds neither spoke.

Mr. Parker bade his daughter speak first.

"You desire to see M. Parker, ladies?" she inquired, in French.

"Yes, mademoiselle," the younger in appearance answered. "Is this the gentleman?"

"It is, madame."

"No doubt you wonder who we are."
"We await to learn at your pleasure, madame."

"Let us then make ourselves known to you, by showing our faces."

The younger threw up her veil, the other doing likewise at almost the same time, and exclamations of surprise followed.

They were Broadway Billy and Harry Freeman!

"What is the meaning of all this tomfoolery?" cried Mr. Parker, half indignantly.

"Our lives depend on it, sir," answered Billy. "As we had promised to call on you, and as we had to disguise, we thought we would put our make-up to the test. It seems all right."

"Yes, no one could guess who you are, of course; and, by the way, you are the very fellows I wanted most to see."

"What's in the wind?"

"My daughter has been stolen from the school where she was attending, and we have no idea where she can be. You must aid us in finding her, Mr. Weston, you and Mr. Freeman."

"When was she stolen?"

"This very morning."

"You have told the police?"

"We have just come from there."

"Have you any clue?"

"None."

"Tell us all about it."

This was quickly done, Billy and Harry listening attentively.

"And you say the prefect questioned you closely?" asked Billy, as soon as it was told.

"Yes; whether I had any enemy or not, what acquaintances I have here in Paris, and what friends I made during the passage from New York—"

"I am interested in the latter," said Billy, interrupting. "You were quite intimate with M. Rosenthal, the rascal I tried to arrest, and you may have told him considerable about your business."

Mr. Parker had given a start of surprise.

"Do you think he can have a hand in it?" he asked, excitedly.

"Just as likely as not. Will you tell me again the address he gave you here in Paris?"

Mr. Parker did so.

"I was sure I had not made a mistake," said Billy. "That number on that particular street is nothing but a fallen-down stone house, which has been wrecked for a dozen years, and which cannot be touched for as many years to come, owing to some law point."

"Can it be!"

"It is the fact. So, here is further proof for what M. Rosenthal was. And so, being a rascal, may he not be at the bottom of your child's disappearance?"

Mr. Parker was pacing the floor.

"And if he is such a rascal, what of M. Beaumont?" he questioned. "He was introduced to us by M. Rosenthal, after the steamer touched at Plymouth, where he came on board."

"He is the very person I want to learn more about," said Billy. "You told us something concerning him on our way to Paris from Havre. Do you know where he resides? Do you expect to see him again while you are in Paris?"

"I believe he did not name his address, but he promised to call upon us here to-day. There can be little question about his honesty, however, for he recommended me to one of the first bankers of Paris, and the banker in turn spoke very highly of him."

"It is quite unlikely," said Polly.

"Nevertheless, the fact that he knew M. Rosenthal so well tells against him," Billy declared. "Did you tell the prefect this?"

"No."

"Then it is a clue Harry and I will work upon. Harry, can we find this lost child, do you think?"

"We will try it; perhaps we can if the thugs don't find us first."

"The thugs?" questioned Mr. Parker.

"We had a close call for our lives last night," exclaimed Billy. "That is the reason we are in disguise now. We want it thought that we are dead, if it can be made to work."

They were urged for the particulars, both by father and daughter, and Billy told all that had taken place.

He had barely done when a boy entered bearing a card.

"It is M. Beaumont," said Parker.

"Let him come up," requested Billy.

"Certainly; but you—"

"Have your daughter direct the boy to make no mention that you have company, and if possible, conceal us somewhere. You will never regret it, Mr. Parker; this man knows Rosenthal, and I believe Rosenthal knows where your child is."

"It shall be done," Parker cried. "Polly, give the directions."

Polly turned to the *garcon* and said a few words, and the lad was off to haste to obey.

Large, heavy *portieres* separated this room from the adjoining one, and Polly quickly placed Billy and Harry behind these and drew the *portieres* so it was impossible for them to be seen.

A moment later M. Beaumont walked in.

He was the pink of fashion and politeness, as polished as a prince—is supposed to be.

At sight of him Broadway Billy gave a start. He had seen that face before; it was the face of M. Rosenthal, after he had unmasked him!

The first greetings over, Polly Parker said:

"M. Beaumont, we are in great trouble; you must notice it in our faces."

"Truly, I thought something must be wrong," the rascal declared. "Pray tell me what it is."

"You speak English?"

"Enough to struggle along with in conversation."

"Then we will speak in that tongue, for papa must take part in it, you know."

"As ze mademoiselle please," was the rejoinder, in English words with a very marked French accent.

Broadway Billy caught on, though he could not know just what had been said, that this had been brought about for his benefit.

Polly then rattled away, telling what had happened, and M. Beaumont listened attentively, but expressing his feelings frequently by expression of face and gestures while she was talking.

"You have told the police?"

Mr. Parker now took it up and gave that part of the matter, and he wound up with the demand:

"Where is your friend, M. Rosenthal?"

"He has gone to Italy," the prompt response. "But I hope you have not held him in suspicion?"

"Well, the prefect demanded to know what friends I had made on the voyage, and he was about the only one with whom I was at all intimate, and it has been charged that he was something of a rascal, sir."

CHAPTER XIII.

BILLY AND HARRY ARE WANTED.

BROADWAY BILLY was itching with the desire to step in and arrest this arch villain, then and there, but he felt that it would not do.

There seemed little doubt but he was at the bottom of the stealing of Berry Parker, and to arrest him might be to lessen the chances of finding her. So, Billy had to restrain himself.

M. Beaumont's face had an expression of greatest surprise.

"Can it be possible!" he cried, in his broken English which we will not try to imitate. "I cannot believe it, monsieur."

"There is certainly some foundation for it, sir," Mr. Parker declared. "He was arrested on landing at Havre, but some of his accomplices interfered and he made good his escape."

"I cannot believe it of him, Monsieur Parker. He has always appeared as a gentleman to me."

"Do you know him well, sir?"

"No, it is true I did not, but I always took him to be an honorable gentleman. I hope your suspicion against him does not cast reflection upon me!"

"Oh! not at all, Mr. Beaumont. I only wanted to get at the truth if I could. If he has gone to Italy, as you say, it is impossible that he can have had anything to do with the stealing of my child."

"Quite impossible, monsieur. Oh! I cannot think evil of him. But this will not do; we must discover and rescue your child. I will go to the police myself and urge them."

"We have already done that, sir."

"Yes, but I am personally acquainted with M. Meulan, one of the commissaires, and I will go to him and have him use all his efforts upon this one case for the present. He will do it at my request. By heavens! your child shall be found, monsieur! I will find her!"

At that moment the door opened and the same *garcon* entered bearing another card.

He gave it to Polly Parker.

A flush mounted to her face the instant she looked at it, and she cried:

"Papa, it is he! I will have him shown up at once. It is he of whom I have told you, the Viscount de Francois."

At mention of the name the face of M. Beaumont turned pale.

"I will retire before he comes in," he said hastily. "We are not friends, and something unpleasant may be said. You will pardon me, mademoiselle? and you, monsieur?"

"If you must go—"

"I must. The Viscount de Francois is not a gentleman, and—"

"Monsieur!" cried Polly, flashing up with indignation. "Take care what you are saying!"

She had already dismissed the boy, telling him to show the caller up to the parlor, and as the viscount had followed his card to the landing, he was almost at hand now.

"I repeat it," M. Beaumont insisted. "M. le Viscount de Francois is no gentleman, but a frequenter of the resorts on the Rue Saint Germain, even if not, indeed, worse than that—"

"Liar!"

The door had opened, and on the sill stood a handsome young man, his arms folded and his eyes flashing.

"I repeat it," he cried, in French. "You are a liar! I am not a gambler, M. Beaumont, alias a dozen other names; but you, if you had your deserts, would not be far from Toulon to-day!"

"This to me!" cried M. Beaumont. "Take that!"

He struck at the face of the handsome young man with his glove, but the fist of the viscount took him under the ear and laid him out.

With muttered curses M. Beaumont got upon his feet, and taking a card from his pocket he flung it at the feet of his enemy, bidding him select a second just as soon as possible, and left the room.

"The dog!" the viscount cried. "I do not fight with every cur that barks at my heels!"

He was so indignant that it was some moments before he could speak calmly.

Polly greeted him in a joyous manner, and presented him to her father, who received him cordially.

Broadway Billy and Harry Freeman now stepped out from behind the *portieres*, and

Billy addressed himself to Mr. Parker saying:

"We have no business to hear what this gentleman has to say, so we will take our leave and keep an eye upon that hyena who has just gone out. I had all I could do not to arrest him, for he is Romaine Rosenthal!"

"The devil!" Mr. Parker ejaculated.

"A first cousin to him, I'll be bound," Billy declared. "He is playing you, Mr. Parker, but he will find that we are loaded for bear before he gets done with us. We'll keep him in sight, and we'll have your child before he knows what has happened."

"He ought to be arrested at once—"

"No! no! that won't do," Billy protested. "He knows where your child is, and if arrested you might never see her alive again. That's the only reason I didn't pounce upon him."

"Ah! that is so."

"You mustn't even allow him to know you suspect."

"That will be hard to do; it will be hard work for me to keep my hands from his throat."

"But, you must do it. Does your friend speak English, Miss Polly?"

"No."

"Then you take him in hand and make him keep cool over this matter. Harry and I will handle it, and there will be some dancing before we are done."

"So it shall be, Mr. Weston."

"There is more to this than I ever thought," spoke up Harry. "You see, this fellow seems to be hand in glove with M. Gerbeau the banker, M. Meulan the commissary, and others."

"That is true, now you show me."

"And it is our business to bring them all in at the same time, if it can be done. I think I begin to see the scheme, M. Parker."

"And you want me to fall in with it?"

"Yes; if a ransom is demanded, pay it without question, and leave us to do the rest."

"I will do it."

"And, if the demand is made through M. Beaumont," added Billy, "do not be in the least surprised."

"The infernal whelp! But, I will let him play me, and then when the end comes see if I don't make him sweat for it all. Go ahead, boys, and bag the whole poison lot of them."

"That is what we want to do, sir."

"But—"

"What?"

"How can it be? Are you sure you are not mistaken? This man Beaumont was introduced to me by Rosenthal, and yet you say he is Rosenthal; I cannot get it through my head."

Billy had to scratch his own head, now.

"I don't pretend to know how that is," he answered, "but I do know that this is the same man I tried to arrest at Havre. It is the same face that wore the beard I snatched off when I laid hands upon him. That is the one thing I am sure of, unless he is a twin to the other."

Polly was talking with the Viscount de Francois, aside.

"It bothers my head to try to understand it," Mr. Parker declared. "I must leave it to you and the police to solve it."

"And by the way," Billy added, "do not let the police know we are on deck. We want to work under cover if we can, for if the rascals get another chance at us we are done for."

"In case you do not see us or hear from us in forty-eight hours," supplemented Harry, "inform the prefect of police all about the whole matter, and have him look for us. If we keep on our pins you will hear from us in less time than that, however. And now, *au revoir*."

They bowed themselves out, and father and daughter gave attention to their visitor.

Billy and Harry had lowered their vails, and acted well their assumed parts as they left the hotel, but they had not gone far when a plain-looking man stepped in front of them.

At the same time policemen with drawn sabers stepped in place on either side of them, laying hands upon their shoulders, and the plain-looking man informed them that they were under arrest. There was no help for it, and they were marched off to the Depot de la Prefecture de Police without a word.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONFLICT OF AUTHORITY.

THEY had fallen into the hands of the police, who had been on the watch for any one who might have business with M. Parker.

It might have been differently worked, but at the bottom of it was M. Meulan, the rascally commissary, and we can quite easily guess that the arrest had a double significance.

After them followed some men who were not of the police, assuredly.

"This is a nice mishap," Billy complained to Harry, as they went along with their captors.

"It is, true enough," Harry growled. "No use kicking here, though; we may as well grin and bear it till we come before the prefect."

"And you must demand to be taken before him," said Billy. "We don't want anything more to do with that commissary, unless it be to pull him down from his pedestal before we are done."

"I will attend to that, and I'll kick up a row if they refuse, you can bet on it."

The policemen ordered them to be still, and they obeyed.

On reaching their destination, sure enough they were marched into the presence of M. Meulan.

"What is the charge?" he demanded, severely.

The police-agent told his story, charging the prisoners with some knowledge of the missing Berry Parker.

This was enough for Harry, and it confirmed the suspicion he and Billy entertained.

"If that is the charge," cried Harry, "how is it we have been brought here without a chance to clear ourselves? Had we been taken to Mr. Parker he would have set the agent right, monsieur."

"And who is M. Parker?" demanded the commissary. "Is he the Judge of Instruction? I commit you to the Depot de la Prefecture to await your hearing. In the mean time an investigation will be made, and if there has been a mistake you will be set at liberty in twenty-four hours."

"We demand to see the Prefect de Police," cried Harry.

"You cannot see him. Officers, away with them to the cells."

"Follow me," whispered Harry to Billy, in English. "Draw your weapons, but do not use them, of course."

This while the commissary was speaking.

With a light leap Harry was over the rail and had his back to a corner, and not a moment later Billy was with him.

The policemen not looking for such a move, were taken by surprise, and the two had sprung beyond their reach before they could detain them. And now they faced around with drawn revolvers.

"This is an outrage," cried Harry, "and we will not submit to it. Monsieur la Commissary, we ourselves are detectives, and we can prove it if you will allow us to see the Prefect de Police for one moment. Officers, keep your distance; you are fairly warned."

"Morbleu!" cried the commissary. "This to me? Do you know that you are very

likely to go to the *bange* for this? Throw down your arms and surrender!"

"Not to you!" cried Harry. "What we have asked is no crime, and telling you that we are detectives under the prefect, it is your duty to prove whether this is so or not."

"You dare to tell me what my duty is!"

"We dare to stand up for our rights."

"Officers, take them!"

"Back!"

Harry and Billy raised their arms and took aim, Billy following Harry's cue, and the policemen held back.

How it would have terminated we will not venture to guess, but just at that moment the prefect himself put in his appearance, and he demanded to know what all the trouble was about.

"These two young men, arrested on suspicion, defy my authority," explained the commissary.

"What is the charge against them?"

"Arrested on suspicion of having had something to do with the disappearance of the child of M. Parker, the American."

"This is folly, monsieur, I know these young men."

"You know them?"

"What did I tell you?" cried Harry. "Monsieur le Prefect, we told him to call you to identify us, but he refused and insisted upon locking us up unheard. This is the truth."

"Why would you not take them at their word and call me, M. Meulan?"

"I intended locking them up and then coming to consult with you."

"Well, let us not discuss that. Young men, put up your weapons."

Harry obeyed and Billy followed his example promptly.

"Are these not the young men who reported to you last night about the attempted arrest at Havre?" the prefect asked.

"Is it possible?" cried the commissary, adjusting his glasses to look more closely.

"Of course it is so. You are usually quick to know a face, M. Meulan. But, they are in clever disguise, I have to admit. Erase whatever entry you have made in the case. Young men, come with me."

Billy and Harry followed the Prefect de Police to his own office.

"Now," said he, "I want to know all about this business."

"How much shall I tell?" asked Harry, turning to Billy.

"All about our adventure of last night, and why we desired to keep our escape a secret," answered Billy.

"And about M. Beaumont?"

"That is our own clue, Harry. If the worst comes to us, it is known to Mr. Parker, and you have told him what to do about it in that event. We want to use that ourselves."

"All right."

Harry turned again to the prefect and gave him an understanding of what had taken place.

The great head of the Paris police leaned forward as he listened, evidently under suppressed excitement, and as soon as Harry had done, exclaimed:

"You must bear charmed lives!"

"We brought them away with us, anyhow," laughed Harry. "But, now that it is known that we escaped, our lives will be held cheap."

"Yes, truly; and you must be on the alert every moment. I will have a couple of men to follow your every step, if you desire it, while you are at work, or until the matter is settled."

Harry submitted this to Billy.

"It will be a good plan," Billy agreed.

"We will be sure of having some one within call. But," he added in whisper, "it ought to be without the knowledge of that stiff-necked commissary, if possible."

This Harry translated to the prefect, in guarded tone, and with a look of surprise the prefect demanded to know why.

"We suspect that he is not straight," Harry answered.

"You do!"

"Yes; at any rate, Billy Weston does. Monsieur le Prefect, it is too bad he cannot speak the language like a Frenchman."

"You are right. Could he, I believe he would be the equal of any detective on my staff to-day. His work in London is the proof of it. I want him to have every chance."

"We must drop these disguises here," spoke up Billy.

"What does he say?" the prefect.

"That we must lay off these disguises before we leave here. We are prepared for half a dozen changes at least, at short notice."

"Yes, and you must throw shadowers off your track if you are followed," said the prefect. "You can go from the Palais de Justice by the subterranean passage to the Depot Judiciaire in the Rue de la Sainte Chapelle."

"That we will do, Monsieur le Prefect."

"And it will be well, too, for you to see the Judge of Instruction at the Palais de Justice, and give him the story of the stolen bonds. Now that your attention is divided between the two cases, you had better let him have what points you can give him in respect to the gigantic fraud."

With this Harry and Billy agreed, and having thrown off their female garments, left the Prefecture de Police.

No further incident worthy of mention took place, and finally, from the Palais de Justice they passed through by the underground way to the prison in the Rue de la Sainte Chapelle, where they appeared upon the street in still another disguise.

CHAPTER XV.

THE HAND OF M. MEULAN IS SHOWN.

It had been the intention of Billy and Harry to follow M. Beaumont.

The arrest had upset that plan, and there was nothing to be done, now, but to watch to strike his trail again.

Knowing now the identity of the man, that would be a big help to them, for it gave them several points of vantage. He might visit M. Gerbeau, or M. Meulan, and he would very probably soon call again on Mr. Parker.

For the immediate time being they had thrown their foes off the track.

The latter were still watching for their re-appearance from the Palace of Justice, never thinking of the trick.

The police agents, on the other hand, having gone around to wait in the Rue de la Sainte Chapelle, were following them at a reasonable distance, and were ready to do anything that might be required of them.

Billy and Harry went to the banking-house of M. Gerbeau.

Their present disguise was excellent, and they felt that they could trust it under the eyes of even M. Beaumont himself.

Entering, Harry asked for change for a bill, and while he was getting it Billy looked searchingly around, but there was no sign of any of the familiar faces anywhere.

Just as Harry was putting his money in his pocket, however, who should step in but M. Beaumont himself!

He merely glanced at the two detectives, and passed into the private office of M. Gerbeau.

As there was then no opportunity to overbear anything, Harry and Billy went out.

They loitered around, and finally, at the end of half an hour, their man appeared, walking away at a quick pace.

Billy and Harry allowed him to go some distance, while they waited to see if any

one else was following him, and finally they caught sight of a man whom they might suspect.

"There he is," said Billy, pointing the fellow out to Harry.

"Do you think so?" Harry asked.

"Sure of it."

"Yes, but is he shadowing M. Beaumont or is he only following him in order to get onto our track?"

"By the way he acts I think he is following the man himself, for some purpose or other. Ha! now I have it, Harry, he is one of the police agents, perhaps."

"Can't agree with you on that."

"Why not?"

"It seems that M. Beaumont is a personage of some importance, and they would hardly suspect him."

"Then we may as well give it up and wait for developments. They will come fast enough, presently, I imagine. Hello! the man is going to take a cab."

"And right here is a *fiacre* we can take ourselves, Billy. We will stick to him, now, until the end, unless he proves too smart for us. Since you are sure he and Rosenthal are one, we are sure of our game."

M. Beaumont took a *voiture de place*, and Billy and Harry getting into a hackney coach, the work continued.

The man who had been following Beaumont was seen to be looking eagerly about for a conveyance for himself, as were also the two agents who were guarding Billy and Harry.

M. Beaumont's conveyance took him to the Faubourg St. Germain.

The hackney coach kept at a safe distance behind all the way, and stopped when the *voiture de place* came to a stop.

"Something is up here," cried Harry.

"What do you mean?"

"That is the residence of the Viscount de Francois."

"Ha! if that is the case we must be on the watch. He may mean to assassinate the man."

"We had better inform our aides."

"Right."

Harry looked out, and not far away were their shadows, still on foot as they had been at first.

How they had come there Harry did not pause to question. He knew the police of Paris well enough to be sure they would be there, when he proposed to Billy that he should inform them.

A signal was given, and the two men came up.

"You noted the cab we followed, of course," said Harry.

"Yes."

"In it is a foe of the Viscount de Francois. He may mean him mischief. You had better watch him."

"We will do so," the answer made, "but it is hardly necessary for us to interfere, Monsieur. The man is shadowed, and now that you mention the viscount, we recognize the shadower."

"Who is it?"

"A private detective in the Viscount's employ."

This was translated to Broadway Billy, and he gave an exclamation of admiration.

Neither in New York nor London had he seen anything like the police and detective perfection he found here in Paris. But then, it was scarcely superior to the high art in crime.

While they waited, they saw the viscount himself walking down the avenue in the direction of his home.

As he came on, the man who had been shadowing M. Beaumont drew nearer to the *fiacre*.

When the viscount came nearer, this man made himself visible to the man in the vehicle, and it could be seen that he was talking to him in a determined manner.

The result was, the viscount passed by unharmed and entered his house, and the *fiacre* drove rapidly away. The detective did not follow further, but entered the house, evidently to report.

M. Beaumont drove to a house on the Rue Saint Germain.

There he dismissed his *fiacre*, and entered the house, which Harry Freeman recognized.

It was one of the famous gaming-palaces of that great avenue, one which was open night and day. A player might sit twenty-four hours, if so inclined and his fund was big enough.

Harry knew the rules of the place, and entered with Billy.

As said, they were well disguised.

M. Beaumont did not sit down to play, but retiring to a writing-table in a cozy corner, proceeded to write.

While doing so he discovered there was no blotter at hand.

He called a waiter to the place.

"Bring me a blotting-paper," he ordered.

The servant bowed and hastened away, and soon returned with a new pad of the required article under his arm.

M. Beaumont accepted it and made immediate use of it, and continued with his writing, which engaged him for some little time. When he had done he had several letters for the post.

Billy and Harry had been walking around the room meanwhile.

They were watching their suspect without seeming to do so, and when they saw him about to leave the writing table they had business in that direction.

M. Beaumont had been gone from the table but a moment when Billy was seated and pretending to write, and while he sat there he folded the sheet of blotting paper M. Beaumont had used and put it in his pocket.

"This is all we want for the present, Harry," he declared.

"Shall we go, then?"

"Yes."

They took their leave, and their two shadowers went after them almost like veritable shadows in fact.

Their hackney coach was in waiting for them, and as soon as they had entered it Billy took a small looking-glass from his pocket and applied it to the blotter.

"Ha! the scheme is in motion," he cried. "One of the rascal's letters is addressed to himself, and another to Mr. Parker."

"And we have this proof against him."

"Yes. If these letters are posted immediately, when will they be delivered, Harry?"

"In the early evening."

"Then about that time we will be with Mr. Parker to await the coming of M. Beaumont."

"You think he will go there?"

"As surely as the sun will set to-night."

"All right, we will be on hand. But, where the deuce are we going? This is not the direction I told the driver to take. Hot driver?"

But no attention was paid to the call, and trying the doors of the coach the young detective pards found them locked! What was up now? What did this mean? They asked themselves the question.

CHAPTER XVI.

A FRIGHTFULLY CLOSE SHAVE.

BROADWAY BILLY was quick to guess the truth.

"We are in for it again, Harry," he declared grimly.

"You think we have fallen into the hands of our foes, then?"

"Not a doubt of it, in my mind. They have bribed our driver, and here we are, in a trap."

"Well, it is one that we can get out of, for we can drop the driver with a bullet, if that is necessary. But, I thought we had shaken off the thugs."

"I see the hand of M. Meulan in it, Harry. I believe he is no less a rascal than is M. Beaumont himself. He has betrayed himself, and now has betrayed us into the hands of the Philistines."

Harry laughed, spite of their predicament.

"Call out to the driver again," said Billy. "See what he is going to do about it."

"Hello! driver?" Harry loudly shouted. "What does this mean? If you do not stop at once we'll send lead in search of you. Stop at once, sir!"

The only effect of this was to increase the speed.

Harry called out once more, giving another warning, and then he discharged a shot through the roof of the coach.

Billy, too, was getting ready to take a hand in it, but at that moment the vehicle turned short and suddenly, throwing both to one side, and in the next moment it passed through a dark doorway.

There was a clang behind them, and they were in semi-darkness.

Without the loss of a second the doors of the coach were thrown open, and hands were put in to seize the prey.

Billy and Harry had not time to recover, but immediately began a desperate struggle for the mastery, in which two or three shots were fired, but the odds was too great.

The men were about three to one against Harry and Billy.

One fellow had been hit, and was moaning in a corner, but the others were in deathly earnest and the unequal conflict speedily terminated.

Billy and Harry were prisoners.

"It is your death this time, curse you!" cried a voice which they recognized as that of Jacques Brunn. "We intend to cut your throats; to make sure of you. This way with them."

The place they had entered was a disused stable-yard, which had been covered over with a roofing.

It had been used since as a storage ground of some kind.

Harry had given a loud shout for help before he was overcome, and the shots, too, had added to the alarm.

But the coupe-jarret and his accomplices quickly carried their prisoners into the interior of the old stable, and down into a miserable cellar below.

On this ground, at one time, had stood a very old building, which, fallen down, had been replaced by a huge stable over the same spot, and the cellar still remained, with its stone stairs.

It was a horrible hole at best, and now by the light of a bull's-eye was perfectly hideous.

The captors wore masks, every one, and two had knives in hand.

These two had their right arms bare to the elbow.

Billy and Harry realized that this meant their end, swift and sure. It was a risky business, but the cut-throats evidently had their plan of escape laid.

At one side of the cellar was a huge stone table, and to this the detectives were forced. Harry was immediately forced down upon his back, and one of the men with the knives sprung at him.

Broadway Billy was struggling desperately, and the situation called forth all the strength he could command.

The danger of his ally frenzied him, and the result surprised him.

With a tremendous effort he flung off the man who held his right arm, and in the same motion his hand whipped out a revolver.

The man with the knife had just seized hold upon Harry's hair, when a snap-shot from Billy's revolver entered his heart and he dropped to the floor without a struggle, dead.

Quicker than thought Billy fired again, and one of the men hanging on to him dropped moaning.

Another shot, and yet another fell.

This released Harry, and he, too, was upon his feet, and at that moment two more bull's-eyes flashed upon the scene.

These were in the hands of the police agents who had been following the two pards, but who would have arrived too late but for Billy's action, and each held a revolver in sight.

"Surrender, dogs!" they cried.

"Up with your hands!" shouted Billy, in the Western fashion, forgetful that the English language did not pass current here.

There was no misunderstanding his manner, however, and Harry immediately gave the same

command in French, when the cowed assassins slunk into a corner, those of the number who were able.

One was dead, one was dying, and another was terribly wounded.

"Throw down your weapons," the police-agents further ordered, as they stepped forward together.

One of the men obeyed, but in the next instant something happened and they were all gone from sight. A door behind them had opened, and they fell through!

The door closed after them again immediately, and a defiant laugh was heard coming from somewhere beyond.

The agents threw themselves upon the door, but it was fast.

"Dished!" they cried.

"Let them go," said Harry. "They will be of more use to us free. Is that not so, Billy?"

He repeated it in English.

"Decidedly," Billy answered. "If they want anything more out of us let them jump on. Say, I wonder how they like good American cold lead?"

"I owe you my life, Billy Weston," declared Harry, earnestly. "I am ready to stand by you through thick and thin, now, no matter what comes. I want to repay the debt, somehow."

"Say nothing about it, Harry. But, there is one thing that surprises me."

"What is that?"

"My strength. I had no idea I had such a store of it laid by. I have never really used myself before. That knife at your throat called it forth."

"I am glad you had it in reserve, anyhow. I only wish you could talk the language; the prefect would make you one of his leading agents, I'm sure. But, men, what is going to be done?"

He turned to the agents.

"That is for Monsieur l'Americain to direct," was the answer. "Monsieur le Prefect placed us under his orders."

"Do you hear that, Billy?" Harry joyously cried.

"Yes, I hear, of course," Billy answered.

"Pshaw! I forget that you don't understand. Why, the prefect has really made you a chief already, for he has put these men under your command. I call it a big honor."

"Foolish thing for you to do," declared Billy, though at the same time his face flushed with satisfaction. "What do I know about how to direct?"

"All about it, that's what! Give your orders, sir."

"Well, tell them to call an ambulance and remove the dead and dying, and then report the case to the nearest station. We will meantime go home for another disguise, and they can join us later."

This order was given, and details were quickly arranged.

Leaving the police agents to attend to their duties, Billy and Harry went in new disguise to their lodging.

Here they had dinner, for it was now late in the day and they had not tasted food since morning, and after dinner they made up in new and perfect character disguises.

They went to the hotel.

In order to draw no attention, they came there separately, and each asked to be shown to the room of M. Parker.

With a conversation manual handy in his pocket, Billy was not helpless when apart from Harry, and he was promptly shown to the parlor of the American millionaire.

Mr. Parker was pacing the floor excitedly with a letter in his hand.

Billy had sent up his true name, and as soon as he entered the room Parker handed him the letter, saying as he did so:

"There, read that, Billy Weston, and see how close you have come to the mark in what you said. I'll bet ten to one you are on the right track!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SCHEME PROGRESSING FAVORABLY.

BILLY took the letter and looked at it.

"Will you let me see the envelope?" he asked. It was handed to him, and he examined it closely.

That done, he took the blotting paper from his pocket.

Stepping to a looking-glass, he held the blotter up before it.

"Just look at that, Mr. Parker," he requested "and compare it with the envelope."

"Why, it is the same!" Mr. Parker exclaimed. "Where and how did you get this blotter? You seem to know all about it, my young friend."

"I happen to know something about it," Billy declared. "Harry and I saw this note written, and we secured the blotter after it had been used. The writer was your friend M. Beaumont."

"Ha! the knave!"

The letter was badly scrawled and badly spelled, and was written in English. Billy read it aloud.

It purported to be from a stranger, who, knowing that M. Beaumont was friendly with Mr. Parker, proposed that an order should be given him for a million francs, payable by M. Gerbeau.

"What am I to do?" Mr. Parker asked, anxiously.

"Give Mr. Beaumont the order when he comes," said Billy. "We will take care of him then."

"I had rather take him by the throat and shake him out of his clothes, dang his miserable hide! I don't know whether I can keep my hands off him or not!"

"You must, sir! The safety of your child depends on it. We must play him until we can be led to where she is imprisoned, or detained, and then we can scoop him in without any danger to her."

"Yes, yes, that is so. But, when will he come to see me?"

"Within the hour, I'll bet," answered Billy. "He posted a letter to himself at the same time he posted this, and as soon as he gets it he will be here in haste. That is why we have come. We must be placed behind the portieres again in order to hear what he has to say."

"It shall be done. You will lose nothing, young gentlemen, for serving me well in this business."

"And we are not working for gain," Billy declared.

Billy and Harry told of their latest adventures, and the time passed rapidly away.

Finally a hall-boy came up with a card, and M. Beaumont was ordered to be conducted up to the rooms, Billy and Harry making haste to retreat behind the portieres.

M. Beaumont came in as polished and smiling as ever.

"I humbly crave pardon for the scene of this morning," he said. "It was not my fault. But, M. Parker, I bring you good news; I have here a letter sent me by the rascal who holds your child for ransom."

"And what do they demand?" Mr. Parker eagerly asked, playing well his part. "I care not what the sum, I will pay it."

"We will have them!" cried Beaumont, in his broken English which we will not attempt. "They give me directions how to come to them, and I will communicate with M. Meulan of the police and the officers can follow me. So we shall have them all, and you will be out no money."

"How can I ever repay you, M. Beaumont?"

The rascal brushed the suggestion away with a wave of the hand.

"First let me serve you, sir," he said. "Then we will talk about the other side of it."

"And you can find and rescue my child?"

"Yes, I can, and will. But, you must give me an order on M. Gerbeau for a million francs."

"I will do it most willingly. You see, I do not even question the amount. Why did they not make it five millions? I would give it just as willingly, though it took every cent I could raise in Paris."

"They have asked enough, curse them, monsieur. Then you will give me the order?"

"Have I not said so?"

"Then we have them. I will go to M. Gerbeau and get the money, and the secret agents of the police will follow me. Where I go they will come, and they will be able to take the knaves red-handed."

"But, when is it to be done?"

"On the morrow, so the letter tells me. They direct me to come to you for the order, and to present it to M. Gerbeau at ten o'clock sharp. I suppose they intend to have their spies follow me, but the police will be too smart for them. Ah! monsieur, it gives me pleasure to be able to serve you."

"But, what if you are killed in your duel with le Viscount de Francois?" here spoke up Polly.

"Morbleu!" was the exclamation. "I have not heard from him. He has not the courage to meet me, mademoiselle. He has branded himself a coward, and is not worthy my notice."

"That is too bad, really. How can you have

your revenge, then, for what he has done to you, M. Beaumont? I could not but admire your courage and your command of your temper. The way in which you challenged him was admirable!"

Beaumont looked as if he was tempted to doubt the sincerity of this, but Polly was beaming upon him in a way that turned his head.

"Bah! a mere bagatelle," he cried. "Let us say no more about that; my duty now is to serve you."

"I have had a letter, too," said Mr. Parker, now. "I will show it to you, M. Beaumont. The writing proves it was from the same person, and I was told to be ready to meet the demand, you see."

"Yes, yes. They have laid a good trap, but they will fall into it themselves, Monsieur Parker, mark what I say."

"If it were only possible to rescue the child to-night."

"But it is not; you see they have laid down the plans we must go by. Would that it were possible, monsieur."

He talked on for a time, and then took his leave.

As soon as he had gone Broadway Billy leaped out from behind the portieres, and, throwing dignity to the wind, executed a brief but fantastic dance, to the amusement of all.

"We have got him!" he cried. "If Harry and I don't scoop them it will be a queer thing, now."

"Rest assured of that," said Harry. "That is to say, if they don't scoop us first. But, they have tried that twice, and with poor success."

"I have heard that the third time never fails," observed Mr. Parker. "You must look out for them now, doubly sharp. If I were you I would lie low until to-morrow."

"Couldn't do that, anyhow!" averred Billy. "The fever is consuming me, and if I let up the pressure for a moment I am a goner. Come, Harry, we must keep the pot boiling!"

With his merry laugh, Billy left the room. Harry following him.

The moment they passed the door they played their assumed parts again.

Going below they found their shadowers, who told them the direction M. Beaumont had taken, and as they were but a moment behind him they soon had him under surveillance again.

They followed him to the abiding-place of Baptiste Pegot.

Here chance favored them, and they were enabled to get into an adjoining room to that of Pegot's and listen.

Not only could they listen, but see as well. There was Pegot, his daughter—whose name they presently learned was Therese, and a little girl whom they knew at once to be Berry Parker!

"I will remain with you till midnight," M. Beaumont said, "when we will take the child to her papa's friends."

"Oh! I am so glad," cried Berry, drying her eyes.

"And there your bad foes can never find you," M. Beaumont assured. He, by the way, had assumed a disguise, so that he could not afterward be recognized.

"Where is this place?" asked Therese.

"The lady's name is Madame Jenardier," M. Beaumont answered.

"And who may she be?"

"Well, that is enough for you to know, my dear."

Therese looked at him searchingly, bit her lip, and said no more.

"You had now better give the dear child a taste of wine to keep up her courage and strength," M. Beaumont suggested.

As he said this he handed to Pegot a folded bit of paper, which looked as if it might contain a powder—and it did! Pegot got some wine; prepared a glass for the child, putting the powder into it, and in twenty minutes after drinking it the little girl was sound asleep.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BILLY'S CLEVER MOVE.

WHEN the child fell asleep, then the plotters could talk as they pleased.

And they gave out the whole scheme, or nearly so, save on one point, and that was, they did not let Therese know where the child was to be taken.

Finally she threw herself upon a bed beside the child, and in a little while her breathing indicated that she was sound asleep. Seeing this, M. Beaumont called to her to make sure.

She made no answer.

"She is sound enough," her father remarked.

"Yes; and now tell me what is the reason you are so still before her?"

"Do you not know? She loves Jean Roch, and if she should find he has a mistress she would go and tear her eyes out."

"Ho-ho! Then we must be careful to take the child away from here without waking her up. That would be unpleasant, you see, and it might be the means of spoiling the scheme."

"What of the detectives?"

"They are going to be watched so closely that they can do nothing."

"Where are they?"

"At last report they had not left their lodgings."

Harry passed this to Billy in whisper, and they now knew how really perfect were their disguises.

It was after midnight when a hackney coach was heard to stop before the house, and a minute later M. Max Romaine entered the room.

"Are you all ready?" asked M. Beaumont.

"Yes, all ready. Have you administered the sleeping drug?"

"Yes, everything is in readiness. Take care not to waken Mademoiselle Therese when you lift the child."

M. Max motioned to Pegot and they lifted the child from the bed, and when M. Beaumont had placed her cloak around her she was carried down-stairs and put into the conveyance.

No sooner had they left the room than Therese was up, and hastily preparing for the street she hastened down the darkened hall and waited.

The hackney rolled away, M. Beaumont went in another direction, and her father turned in the direction of his favorite saloon, where she knew he was likely to spend the rest of the night.

She darted out and followed the coach like a phantom, almost.

Billy and Harry had previously descended and passed out another way and so gained their *fiacre*.

They were following the hackney coach, and after them came their shadowers to be on hand at their slightest call. And in this manner they proceeded to the neighborhood of Jean Roch's abode.

Here Billy and Harry consulted with their police aides, and it was decided to go to the housetops and descend into that particular house.

It will be remembered that Jean Roch occupied the topmost floor.

Going into a saloon at the end of the block, they passed through as if upon an ordinary errand, but that was the last the persons in the saloon saw of them. They entered the hall from the outside and were speedily upon the roof unseen.

It took them but a moment, then, to reach the house they had under their surveillance.

The police agents had known by the style of the house that they would find a skylight, and what kind, and they were not mistaken.

Looking down, they found it was over the end of a hall where the stairs came up, and when they had opened it, which was a simple thing for them to do, they heard voices.

They waited.

Presently M. Max Romaine, Pierre Marchaud, and Jean Roch, came out of one of the rooms and descended the stairs.

Now was their chance, and Billy and Harry and their two allies dropped lightly down into the hall, where they crouched behind some boxes and barrels which stood there.

They wanted to get Jean Roch back again, when they would make their descent upon his domicile.

While they waited they heard a stealthy step on the stairs, and looking, saw a woman coming up, who, on reaching the top, listened for a moment at the door, and the next instant flung it open.

"You!" she cried, on beholding Corinne. "You is it, who have robbed me of the affection of Jean Roch? I will tear out your eyes—"

Corinne uttered a scream, and then they were heard fighting like very tigers, at the same time screaming and exclaiming, gasping and vociferating, as only frenzied women can.

The police agents would have sprung to separate them, but Billy held them back.

"Bid them wait," he said to Harry. "We must have Jean Roch!"

The agents obeyed, and in another minute Jean Roch was heard running up the stairs.

He sprung into the room with an oath and separated the women, and in the next moment Billy and Harry, with the two agents, followed him.

Jean Roch was a desperate character, and he

turned to show fight, but before he could defend himself he was overpowered and handcuffs were upon his wrists and he was a prisoner.

The two young women, too, were promptly taken.

Berry Parker, still under the influence of the drug that had been given her, slept through it all.

"What do you think about it now, Jean Roch?" demanded Harry.

"I am not Jean Roch," was the growling response.

"No? Well, we will call you that anyhow."

"He is Jean Roch," cried Therese Pegot. "I will swear to that. He just now struck me because I was tearing out the hair of this thing, and I will have my revenge for it!"

"You lie!" cried Corinne. "His name is Jenardier, and he is my husband."

"Go tell it to the wind," sneered Therese. "Officers, I will do anything to help you. You have only to command me. Anything will I do to make my revenge complete, and then you may do with me what you will. Do you hear what I am saying, Jean Roch? I hate you!"

There was much more of this, but enough quoted. The two young women were not at all choice of their language.

Broadway Billy and Harry held a brief consultation.

It was decided that Billy and one of the police agents should take the child at once to her father and sister, while Billy and the other should remain and guard the prisoners.

This was done.

Billy and his man reached the hotel without incident worthy of mention, and Mr. Parker and Polly were overjoyed at having Berry restored to them.

After a talk with Mr. Parker, Billy and the agent returned to the house where Harry and the other had been left.

Here another consultation was held, and it was decided to keep the prisoners there.

To turn them over to the police would be to give the secret away.

So, they settled down to stay the night out.

At an early hour Broadway Billy repaired in disguise to the hotel, where he had an interview with Polly Parker.

The result was, that she went to the academy, where she told the prioress the good news and asked her to go with her to see the prefect of police, a visit ostensibly to urge him to find the lost child.

Really, however, the business with him was to convey plans Broadway Billy had arranged; and they performed well the matter intrusted to their care.

The prefect bowed them out, when finally their business was done.

"I will do all in my power to find the lost child," he said aloud, as they parted, for the benefit of listening ears. "Word will be sent to you the moment we get hold of a clue, mademoiselle."

"Oh! thank you!" responded Polly. "You cannot imagine what a night we have passed, Monsieur le Prefect."

They returned to the hotel, then, and the bandits had been cleverly duped.

Broadway Billy's net was around them now.

CHAPTER XIX.

BAGGING THE BANDITS.

BETWEEN nine and ten o'clock M. Beaumont called upon Mr. Parker, confident and smiling.

He had come for the draft for a million francs, and it was given him cheerfully, Mr. Parker urging him to make sure of getting the child, even if it had to cost another million.

M. Beaumont assured him, and went away.

Promptly at the hour set he entered the office of M. Gerbeau, the banker, and had a private interview.

"Are we sure of success?" the banker asked.

"Doubly sure of it," M. Beaumont declared, rubbing his hands.

"But, where are the young detectives you told me about? Have you taken care of them?"

"Bah! what can they do? Do they not know that the police, as well as my own men, are against them? They will be watched if they show their heads."

"Well, all I say is, take care! It would be a terrible calamity if this matter should be brought home to us. And, I have my hands full with the matter of the bonds, too."

"You have planned that well?"

"It cannot miscarry, unless something entirely unforeseen happens."

"Then we are probably all secure. Only let this day's work prosper, and we will be in position to do anything."

M. Beaumont took his leave, having surrendered to M. Gerbeau the draft for the million francs and received money with which to pay Jean Roch and the others for their assistance.

Entering a *fiacre*, he drove straightway to the place where the girl prisoner was supposed to be, but where the greatest kind of a surprise awaited him.

He had not noticed men loitering around the banking house.

Neither did M. Gerbeau take note of them when, a little later, he came out and turned his steps in the direction of the Bourse.

No sooner had the banker gone, however, than half a dozen *agents de la police secrete* entered the place and took possession of everything, stopping the business at the moment.

Every clerk was placed under arrest.

Unaware of this, M. Gerbeau went to the Bourse.

The exchange would not be open until twelve o'clock for the sale of public securities.

Nevertheless, M. Gerbeau had business there, and that business was to see that there could be no hitch when the stolen bonds came to the *Salle de la Bourse*.

He was holding a secret conference with two or three others, when some quiet men entered and informed the group that they were prisoners, and in spite of their protests they were led away.

The stolen bonds were recovered!

These prisoners were taken before M. Meulan, who, on seeing them brought in, became so pale and nervous that he could hardly speak.

Monsieur le Prefect was on hand, as also the *Juge d'Instruction*, having some pretended business there at that hour, and turning to the rascally commissary the prefect demanded:

"What is the matter, M. Meulan?"

"I have heart trouble," the knave gasped. "It will pass over soon."

"Yes, the kind of heart trouble that sends men to the *bagnes*, you arch rascal!" the prefect thundered.

M. Meulan started up, and then fell back on his chair helpless.

"Policeman, take that man!" the prefect commanded. "Monsieur le Juge, what I have told you in private I now openly charge. This fellow must be torn down from his pedestal and unmasked. Monseigneur Meulan, the end has come!"

With eyes dilated, and with perspiration breaking out on his face, the villainous commissary was led away to a cell in the Depot.

The others were charged and likewise committed.

But, let us follow M. Beaumont, and see how it had fared with him in his part of the scheme.

Arriving at the domicile of Jean Roch, he entered and knocked at the door of his apartment, when Therese, imitating the voice of Corinne, bade him enter.

He entered, and the instant he did so, Broadway Billy and Harry Freeman both laid hands upon his shoulders and presented revolvers at his head.

"You are my prisoner!" said Billy, grimly. "This is the second time I have said it, and this time there is no escape for you. Be your name Romaine Rosenthal, or M. Beaumont, or whatever it may, you are the man I want, and now I have got you. Do not resist."

"Sacrebleu!" the man exclaimed. "What do you mean? I do not understand your language."

"That's a fake, and it's all exploded," cried Billy.

He snapped on the handcuffs.

"You can't fail to understand that, anyhow," he added. "We'll now take you before the Judge of Instruction, where you will find M. Meulan, M. Gerbeau, and all the rest of your rascally band."

"By the way," said Harry, in French, "where's the million francs?"

"Rascals! I know not what you mean. I demand to be taken before M. Meulan, the commissary, immediately."

"Oh, yes; you will be taken there, but you will find he has been unmasked by this time," Harry rejoined. "What is the use of your pretending any longer? We have got you."

The man was searched and disarmed, and further convicting evidence was found on his person.

By the time this had been done heavy steps sounded on the stairs, and there came a loud knocking at the door.

"Open, in the name of the law!" was the command.

Harry obeyed the order, throwing open the

door, and in came several policemen with a secret agent at their head.

At sight of M. Beaumont a prisoner the agent paled.

"You come too late," said Harry Freeman. "We have long ago rescued the stolen child from this rascal, and now he is our prisoner. Go back to M. Meulan and report your failure."

"What do you mean?" the agent gasped.

"Just what I say," the answer.

"Well, have things your own way, then. I go back to report what I have discovered here."

The agent turned to leave the room, unmindful of the fact that he was the head of the policemen he had brought there, but the two other agents stepped in his way and he was taken prisoner.

They had had their instructions from the prefect.

The policemen were made use of, and the prisoners were taken from the house and to the prefecture.

Meantime other secret agents had been at work, and the morning had witnessed the arrest of the other rascals concerned in the schemes, and they were all gathered in.

There were Pierre Marchaud, M. Max Romaine, Baptiste Pegot, Jacques Brunn, and the others who had not already been killed or wounded, and the police were in high feather over their grand swoop-down upon the evildoers.

The policemen were especially jubilant over the downfall of "Monseigneur" Meulan.

He had been for a long time heartily detested.

CHAPTER XX. CONCLUSION.

THAT same afternoon the prisoners had their hearing.

On that occasion the chief witness against them was Broadway Billy, with Harry Freeman.

Billy was looked upon with admiration as he gave in his testimony, which had to be translated, of course.

He was the hero of the hour.

His fame had reached Paris ahead of him, and Paris was determined to outdo London, if possible, in showing him honor.

The prisoners were sent from the Depot to prison, every one of them, and the prospect ahead of them was not by any means bright. At last a ring, long known as the Bourse Bandits, was broken.

These fellows had long puzzled the police, for with M. Meulan to pull the wires and manage things for them, it had been impossible for the honest agents to get at the truth. And then, who would expect to find men so honorable as M. Gerbeau and others doing wrong?

It had remained for Broadway Billy, the great American detective, to drag them forth into the light.

The prefect de police gave Billy a full commission as a secret agent, and all the force, of every rank and grade, were told to honor his authority, and to lend him aid whenever required.

Harry Freeman, too, was made a secret agent, and he was even more proud than Billy of the honor. It was new to him, while Broadway Billy had never failed to receive praise wherever he had worked out a case. He was a detective by nature; as he said, he could not help it.

Nevertheless, he was proud to have his ability recognized here in Paris, which claims to possess the greatest detectives in the world.

Mr. Parker rewarded both him and Harry handsomely for the service they had rendered him. Polly and Berry each gave them warmest thanks.

Polly was afterward wedded to the Viscount de Francois.

Of course Billy cabled at once to New York that he had made the arrest and recovered the bonds, and in return he received a congratulatory message from the Secret Service.

The excitement over, he set about enjoying Paris a little. He and Harry were like brothers, and they made as strong a detective team as could be desired.

THE END.

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